PRAYERS OF THE PROPHETS

A Selection of Qur'ānic Verses

Ali J. Hussain

SJL Press
Chicago

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بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

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This diminutive volume is dedicated to

Selahattin Akpinar
(1352 - 1436 / 1932 - 2015)

﴿ إِنَّا لِلَّهِ وَإِنَّا إِلَيْهِ رَاجِعُونَ ﴾

"Indeed, to God we belong
and indeed, to Him we return."
(Q, al-Baqarah, 2:156)

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AUTHOR'S NOTES

This slim volume gathers together some information on qur'ānic prayers that I hope will be beneficial for the interested reader. The prayers included here are selections that are limited by the following criteria: 1) only verses from the Qur'ān are quoted 2) only those verses in which God is called upon directly, and 3) only verses in which the supplications to God can reasonably be repeated by the reader. The last criterion is admittedly subjective. To address this subjectivity, other verses meeting the first two criteria but not, in my opinion, the last, are referenced in a section at the end, for readers who might opine otherwise or who might be interested in pursuing further.

In all quotations of the Qur'ān, the integrity of verses is maintained. When a particular address to the Lord spans multiple verses, each verse is quoted individually and presented in series. Then the entire group is translated and cited. Whenever a call to the Lord begins within a verse that includes other material prior to or after it, an ellipsis (…) is used to indicate that only the call portion is quoted. Verse beginnings, endings, and numbering are all in accordance with those of the most prevalent Variant of the Qur'ān, that of the Kūfan Ḥafṣ from ʿĀṣim.

The words Qur'ān and Bible are capitalized, but their plurals, and the adjectives qur'ānic and biblical, are lower case. Citations of qur'ānic verses are in (Q, chapter name, chapter number: verse number) format. References to biblical verses are in (Book, chapter number: verse number) format. Dates are provided in both Hijrī and in Julian/Gregorian, with the Hijrī date first.

Arabic Romanization is according to the Library of Congress Romanization system. Translations of Arabic verses throughout are mine. Proper names are translated throughout, except in section titles, where the qur'ānic name is provided along with the English name in parentheses. The Arabic word *islām*, as well as its derivatives, such as *muslim*, etc., are left untranslated, for the reasons explained in the respective section devoted to the subject. Throughout this work, 'Islam' and 'Muslim' (capitalized and non-italicized), refer to the modern faith as we know it, and to its adherents, respectively, while '*islām*' and '*muslim*' (in lower case and italics) correspond to their meanings as used in the Qur'ān. Unlike these sometimes ambiguous terms, translation of the Arabic word '*Allāh*' is unequivocal. Preliminary sections discussing the

terms 'prayer,' '*islām*,' and '*Allāh*,' are provided prior to the main text. Portions of a discourse on the Qur'ān taken from my *100 Classical Islamic Sources*[1] and slightly modified for my purposes here, has also been added as a preliminary section prior to the main text. To maintain smooth flow of the main text, additional notes and references are relegated to footnotes. A select bibliography is provided at the end.

A special thanks to Fakhar Mohammad Iqbal, author of a similar book of prayers entitled *Duʿāhīn*[2] and father of my brother Shariq. I am indebted to him and to his blessed wife, my father and mother from another brother, for their inspiration, support, and prayers over the years. I pray for their good health, long life, and success in this world and in the next.

Credit for anything commendable in this work is due to my teachers and to theirs before them. The responsibility for any flaws herein is no one's but my own.

Ali J. Hussain
Chicago, 1446/2024

[1] Ali J. Hussain, *100 Classical Islamic Sources* (Chicago: SJL Press, 2017).

[2] Fakhar Mohammad Iqbal, *Duʿāhīn* (Hyderabad: Chapkhāneh-i Hazrat-i Abū al-Khayr, 2016), and the most recent edition, *Muntakhab masnūn duʿāhīn* (Chicago, n.p., 2025).

INTRODUCTION

This project is inspired by Sayyid Jalali's *Our Lord!: Selected Qur'ānic Invocations of Forgiveness and Hope*.[3] This expands on that project, including a wider selection of verses, and organizes the presentation according to which prophets or other figures are the first-person speakers in the qur'ānic verses. The aim is to highlight the invocations uttered by prophets and other righteous figures in the Qur'ān, gathering all such examples from the entire Qur'ān, and presenting them to the reader in a logical, organized format for easy reference, memorization, and personal use. The Qur'ān is a compilation of over 6,000 verses, most of which are injunctions towards good deeds and avoidance of evil, descriptions of the signs of God, narrative descriptions of the stories of prophets and the people to whom they were sent to preach the message of one God, and rhetorical arguments proving the truth of only one God. Among the many kinds of qur'ānic verses are those that include direct supplications to God by individuals. Some of them can be repeated by anyone in similar circumstances or having similar wishes or desires. This volume focuses only on those verses that might reasonably be repeated by believers as invocations, and which can be recited in ritual prayers, at waking, before sleeping, or at any time one feels the spiritual or emotional need to address the Lord in supplication. The selection presented here is designed to be used by those who wish to use the same words used by the prophets and other believers, as quoted in the Qur'ān. God states in the Qur'ān,

﴿ ادْعُونِي أَسْتَجِبْ لَكُمْ ﴾

"Call upon me; I will respond to you."
(Q. Ghāfir, 40:60)

Based on this verse, anyone who believes in God and in the Qur'ān must therefore also believe that God welcomes their calling upon Him directly, without any intermediary. What better way to call upon the Lord than to use the same words from the Qur'ān that the prophets used to address Him?

[3] Muḥammad Ḥusayn al-Ḥusaynī al-Jalālī, *Our Lord!: Selected Qur'ānic Invocations of Forgiveness and Hope* (Chicago: The Islamic Community, 1408/1988).

Surprisingly, a search for scholarly works on the subject led to a dearth of literature specifically focused on such qurʾānic verses. By contrast, there is a plethora of classical sources, both in manuscript and in published works, on these types of prayers calling to the Lord, mostly based on *ḥadīth* literature (recorded traditions of the sayings and deeds of Muḥammad). As a working theory, I posit that few, if any works devoted solely to these qurʾānic verses were written in the early centuries simply because they were not needed. Since much early education in that era was qur'ānic education and since, at that time, the same types of people who would have been the reading audience for such a book were already so familiar with these types of qurʾānic verses that the verses were immediately recognizable to them, there was little need for books dedicated to that very small and very familiar data set. The much longer prayers uttered by the Prophet himself, their significantly larger quantity, the recording of details of the occasions of their utterance by the Prophet (waking, sleeping, eating, births, marriages, funerals, etc.) and their transmission from the Prophet, along with their deeper meanings and interpretations, easily supplied enough matter for a voluminous corpus of literature on the subject. Some examples of these types of works are provided in a dedicated section entitled 'Invocation Literature,' after the main text.

There are over a hundred verses in the Qurʾān in which a speaker addresses God directly. Attempting to find every such verse via a simple internet search yields many potential results. Unfortunately, many of the results appear to be based on unrefined concordance searches of keywords such as "our Lord…" or similar terms and, as a result, often include some verses that are inappropriate. Many of those problematic quotations are not useful for our purposes because they cannot be generalized outside of their specific narrative context. For example, when the Queen of Sheba calls upon the Lord and states that she has converted to belief in Him (Q, al-Naml, 27:44), her exact words can hardly serve as a prayer for others to repeat since they would make no sense out of their original context. Additionally, there are numerous verses that do not serve our purposes for other reasons. Some verses are in the context of disbelievers or hypocrites pretending to be believers, asking the prophets to make requests of God, then, once the requests are granted, continue to reject God (for example, those who attempted to deceive Jesus in Q 3:53). Other verses describe the hereafter, predicting

a future after the Day of Judgement in which disbelievers, once they witness the fires of hell with their own eyes, become convinced of the Truth and beg God for intervention and forgiveness after it is too late (e.g., Q 44:12). Certainly these types of verses are not the best options for our purposes. There are also verses in which prophets address God directly but their calls to the Lord are not requests for Divine intervention. Instead, they may be asking questions or engaging in other communication (such as when Zechariah addresses God in Q 19:8 and 19:10). These types of verses do not serve our purposes, so they are not included in the main text. Instead, they are incorporated in a dedicated section entitled 'Other Invocation Verses' near the end.

The main text of this volume gathers together qur'ānic verses with relatively widespread applicability, that supplicants can use to address God directly. First, verses attributed to the prophets are presented, in historical chronological order by prophet, regardless of their chronological appearance in the Qur'ān. Then, verses attributed to non-prophetic figures are presented, followed by verses attributed to anonymous believers. There are also many verses in which God commands someone to "Say…" something. These commands are sometimes addressed to a specific prophet, such as Noah, and at other times to Muḥammad, and sometimes the text is non-specific and appears to be addressed generally to all of God's creation. Those response command verses that are general enough to be repeated as supplications are included as the final section of the main text. The context-specific commands fail to serve our purposes and are therefore excluded from this book, with only one exception. It is included both to provide the reader with an example of those types of verses, and to pique the reader's interest in what I hope will be the sequel to this book, one that focuses entirely on verses in that category.

The verses selected for this compilation describe people directly addressing God with their requests. Although the verses are usually specific to the experiences of those individuals in the qur'ānic narrative, their circumstances are common enough that we today might find ourselves in similar situations. Sometimes they are expressions of desperation, requesting help, and at other times, they are expressions of thanks for the blessings bestowed by the Lord. Many are requests by prophets of God who were suffering rejection, threats, or even attacks by the very people whom they were trying to help. There are also examples

of other religious figures, and sometimes non-religious or even irreligious individuals who, after initially disbelieving the prophets and messengers, eventually have a change of heart and become believers. Included are a few verses specific to children and childbearing that might be fitting for those yearning for pregnancy or trying to start a family of their own. Many of us today might find ourselves at some point or another in similar situations and might wish to call upon the Lord using the same qur'ānic words that exemplary figures before us used. I hope the reader finds the following pages useful towards that end. May your prayers be answered.

﴿ وَآخِرُ دَعْوَاهُمْ أَنِ الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ ﴾

"And their closing prayer is
'All praises due to God, the Lord of the worlds!' "
(Q. Yūnus, 10:10)

THE WORD 'PRAYER'

The Oxford English Dictionary lists eleven different possible meanings for the word 'prayer' in English.[4] The Merriam-Webster Dictionary lists five meanings, the first of which includes the sub-categories: "an address (such as a petition) to God or a god in word or thought" or "a set order of words used in praying," and "an earnest request or wish."[5] Included among the many meanings of the word 'prayer' in English are ritual prayers recited or performed by individuals (e.g., the Lord's prayer, also known as the 'Our Father,' among Christians, and *Modeh Ani*, *Hashkivenu* among Jews), congregational ritual prayers or masses (e.g., the Nicene Creed, *Aleinu* etc.), prayers for specific occasions (e.g., the Eucharist, *Hallel*, *Kaddish* etc.), daily ritual prayers (e.g., Matins, Vespers, *Shacharit*, *Minchah*, *Arvit*, etc.), and specific liturgical readings, whether by individuals or in congregation. In Arabic, there are separate distinct words for each of these types of prayer. The Arabic word *duʿāʾ* is used for the type that involves addressing God directly with a request, wish, or petition. While this is a 'prayer' in general terms, more specific English terms for this type of prayer include 'invocation' and 'supplication.'

Only a subset of qurʾānic invocations is included in this text. In Islam, as in many other faiths, there is an entire subgenre of literature devoted to invocations and supplications, and a vast corpus is available for the interested reader. Most such works document the wide array of invocations based on the prophetic traditions of Muḥammad. A brief selection of those types of works is provided at the end of this volume.

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[4] Oxford University Press, *Oxford English Dictionary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), "prayer."

[5] Merriam-Webster, Inc., *Merriam-Webster's Dictionary and Thesaurus* (Springfield, MA: Merriam-Webster, 2007), "prayer."

THE WORD '*ISLĀM*'

While the qurʾānic prayers presented here are translated into English, the word '*islām*' and its derivatives (*muslim*, etc.) are not. That is because the meaning of the word, as it is used in the Qurʾān, is very different from its meaning today. The word today encompasses over fourteen centuries of developments in religious law, jurisprudence, exegesis, philosophy, and countless other aspects defining the faith. None of these developments existed at the time of the qurʾānic revelation and any application of modern usage to a qurʾānic text dated centuries earlier is back-projection. A close look at the Qurʾān itself reveals that the word '*islām*' is never used to refer to the religion we now know as Islam, nor does the Qurʾān ever address those who followed Muḥammad as '*muslim*s.' When examining how the word '*islām*' is used in the Qurʾān, we can see that it refers to a sort of ancient proto-monotheistic belief which, according to the Qurʾān, is the pure, ancient belief in *the* One God, the Creator of the Heavens and the Earth, the faith that was naturally adopted by all of God's prophets millennia before Muḥammad was born.[6] In fact, according to the Qurʾān, the Prophet Muḥammad never aimed to establish a new religion at all. He was, like all the other prophets before him, a reformer calling for people to shun pagan idol-worship and to *return* to the ancient pure faith of Noah, Abraham, David, Solomon, Moses, Jesus and others: belief in the One, Almighty God. The Qurʾān calls that ancient faith *islām*.

[6] For details, see my forthcoming publication on Abraham, Islam, and the First Commandment.

THE WORD '*ALLĀH*'

While I have not conducted a statistical survey, I believe it is safe to state that the Arabic word '*Allāh*' may be the most erroneously untranslated word in history. In the English language, the word 'God' (capitalized) refers to the Creator of the universe and the Supreme Being, while the word 'god' (lower case) refers to a being or spirit worshiped as a deity. For example, some pagan gods include Zeus and Apollo among the Greeks, Osiris and Ra among the Egyptians, and Odin and Thor among the Vikings. In the Arabic language, the word for 'God' (capitalized) is *Allāh* and the word for 'god' (lower case) is *'ilāh*. It is therefore incorrect to write or speak an English sentence, or to translate an Arabic sentence into English, while failing to translate the Arabic word *Allāh* into English as 'God.' Just as the French word for God is 'Dieu' and the Spanish word for God is 'Dios,' the Arabic word for God is '*Allāh.*' Why then, does one so frequently encounter in English language literature sentences such as, "Allah is the god of Muslims" or, the ubiquitous, "Muslims believe that there is no god but Allah?" Such failures in translation serve literally to exclude Islam and Muslims from being in the same category as believers in God. Why is it that European and American writers so readily (some, even eagerly) identify Muslims as a people who believe in a different, and *other* god? Some might be doing so unconsciously, simply parroting those before them or repeating a trend already well-established in their society. Others, learned scholars who are certainly aware of what is described above, do so consciously. At best, the behavior is unconsciously passed from one generation to another. At worst, it is a deliberate, nefarious planting of poisonous seeds to ensure that the unsuspecting reader internalizes a sense that Islam and Muslims are the "other" and not one of "us."[7] Moreover, the fact that the majority of the world's Muslim population is Africans, Middle

[7] Few are more prolific in disseminating pseudo-scholarly lies about Islam or more brazen with their anti-Islamic invective than Christian missionaries. Rick Brown's honest presentation of the facts is a welcome exception. See: "*Who Is 'Allah'*?" *International Journal of Frontier Missions* 23, no. 2 (2006): 79–82; and his subsequent "Who Was 'Allah' before Islam? Evidence that the Term 'Allah' Originated with Jewish and Christian Arabs," in *Toward Respectful Understanding and Witness among Muslims: Essays in Honor of J. Dudley Woodberry*, ed. Evelyne A. Reisacher (Hattiesburg, MS: William Carey Library, 2012), 147-178.

Easterners, and Asians, while the majority of these othering writers are European (and their American descendants), makes it difficult to believe that colonialism and racism play no part in the use of '*Allāh*' when there is an equivalent in the translated language.[8] Whether done deliberately, or unconsciously, it is wrong.

Unless it is in a linguistic discussion of the word, as in this sentence, the word '*Allāh*' should never be used in English; it should always be translated into English as 'God.' Translating the Islamic declaration of faith into English as "I bear witness that there are no gods other than Allah" is just as absurd as stating the same declaration in Arabic as "*ashhadu an lā ilāha illā* God." Sadly, Muslims frequently make the same mistake in reverse. Speaking to someone in English and saying, "May Allah bless you" is just as absurd as saying "God-*u akbar*!" (God is the greatest!) or "*al-ḥamdu li*-God" (All praises due to God), both phrases commonly uttered in Arabic by even non-Arabic speaking Muslims. And, naturally, the word '*Allāh*' is used by native Arabic speakers to refer to God, regardless of their religious affiliation. Arab Christians, Arab Jews, and even Arab atheists, when speaking or writing in Arabic, refer to God as '*Allāh*.' Arabic New Testament bibles describe Jesus as the son of '*Allāh*' and Arabic translations of the Torah refer to the Children of Israel as *Allāh*'s chosen people.

The isolation and othering of '*Allāh*' is not coincidental. It is an easily recognizable pattern prevalent in Euro-American discourse. This should come as no surprise, since the history, culture, and literature of Europe have been steeped in hostility towards Islam for at least a thousand years.[9] I would encourage the intelligent reader to be wary of any instance in which the word '*Allāh*' is used in a language other than Arabic.

The word for *Allāh* in the English language is: God.

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[8] Some might claim that the word '*Allāh*' is best left untranslated because it is a proper noun. That is a flimsy argument, especially when other proper nouns are translated into their equivalents. How often does one see 'Samuel' and 'Solomon' left untranslated as *Shmuel* and *Shlomo* because they are proper nouns? The argument falls apart completely once one notes that English bibles readily translate the biblical Hebrew proper noun '*Elohim*' as God.

[9] See: Ali J. Hussain, "The Media's Role in a Clash of Misconceptions: The Case of the Danish Muhammad Cartoons," *Harvard International Journal of Press/Politics,* 12:4 (2007).

WHAT IS THE QUR'ĀN?

Muslims believe the Qur'ān to be the literal word of God. This is unlike the traditional Christian view of the Bible as the inspired word of God transcribed by individual apostles years after Jesus. The details of Muḥammad's biography, with which the revelation of the Qur'ān is intimately connected, are available in numerous other sources[10] and the reader is encouraged to pursue those details if interested. For our purposes, the following is a brief summary[11] of the traditional Muslim view of the Qur'ān.

At approximately forty years of age, Muḥammad began to hear and see the angel Gabriel, who was sent by God to relay His words verbatim. These words were spoken by Gabriel to Muḥammad, along with God's instructions to 'recite' the message. These revelations sometimes consisted of only a few words, while at other times they formed lengthy passages. Muḥammad recited these messages publicly to his community. Despite stiff resistance by the pagans of Mecca and subsequent violence, torture, and murder of some of his earliest followers, and even despite attempts to assassinate Muḥammad himself, he continued to preach the revelations. He slowly attracted a small, but increasing, number of followers who memorized the words of the Qur'ān. Some who were literate wrote the words on whatever materials were available: animal hides, palm leaves, pieces of wood, or flat bones such as the shoulder blades of camels. Muḥammad escaped the first assassination attempt and this process of gradual revelation continued over the course of the next eleven years until the revelations were complete, ending with instructions on how to arrange the whole. During the next twenty years after Muḥammad's death, the caliphs who led the new community of believers gathered the various individual transcriptions and compiled the

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[10] Many editions of the earliest primary source, the *Sīrah* of 'Abd al-Malik Ibn Hishām have been published in the original Arabic. Guillaume's is the definitive scholarly English translation: 'Abd al-Malik Ibn Hishām, *The Life of Muhammad: A Translation of Ibn Isḥāq's Sīrat Rasūl Allāh*, ed. Alfred Guillaume (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000).

[11] For an excellent example of a more detailed summary, see Fred M. Donner, "The Historical Context," in *The Cambridge Companion to the Qur'ān*, ed. Jane Dammen McAuliffe (Cambridge, UK; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 23-39.

complete text into a single transcription, copies of which were sent to regions where Islam had spread outside of Arabia. This is the traditional Muslim view of the origins of today's qur'ānic text. In the 19th and 20th centuries, Western scholars of Islam published detailed analyses of the textual history of the Qur'ān questioning the traditional Muslim narrative and dating the compilation of the text to as late as two centuries after Muḥammad's death. Those interested in pursuing serious scholarly research on the Qur'ān must familiarize themselves with these works.[12]

Regardless of whether the textual origins of the Qur'ān can be dated to Muḥammad's lifetime or centuries after his death, this brief history is enough to highlight one of the main differences between the Qur'ān and the Bible. As even the names indicate, the Qur'ān (Arabic, "recitation") appears never to have been viewed by the Muslim community primarily as a book. God's words recited to Muḥammad were recited by Muḥammad to his community, recited by him and his followers in their daily prayers, selections recited on various social occasions such as weddings and funerals, and the entire Qur'ān recited from beginning to end during special prayers during the month of Ramaḍān. Throughout the past fourteen centuries it has been recited in the original Arabic, and to this day, certain Muslims (*ḥuffāẓ*, memorizers) take it upon themselves to memorize the Qur'ān in its entirety by recitation. Even the Arabic term for memorization of the Qur'ān, *ḥifẓ*, implies protection and preservation. It is almost as if the written text was just an afterthought. This is in stark contrast to the word Bible (from Greek *biblia*, "books") indicating that, from its very origins, the Christian Bible was a written work. Its 'books' were written down by the apostles, re-written by copyists, transmitted by the early Christians in writing, and compiled by later Christians into a single volume of text. To this day, Christian

[12] See, for example: John E. Wansbrough, *Quranic Studies: Sources and Methods of Scriptural Interpretation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977); Patricia Crone and Michael Cook, *Hagarism: The Making of the Islamic World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977); Arthur Jeffery, *Materials for the History of the Text of the Qur'ān: The Old Codices* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1937); and a recent English revision of Theodor Nöldeke's original 1860 *Geschichte Des Qorāns*: Theodor Nöldeke, Friedrich Schwally, Gotthelf Bergsträsser, Otto Pretzl, and Wolfgang Behn, *The history of the Qur'ān* (Leiden: Brill, 2013). For a comprehensive overview of the history of the Qur'ān until the present day, see: Ali J. Hussain, *The Living Qur'ān* (Berlin: DeGruyter, 2023).

communities generally view the Bible as a book, intended to be read. With the exception of those familiar with Greek, Aramaic, and biblical Hebrew, it is frequently read in translation.

The Qurʾān also differs in content and style from what one exposed to Western literature might expect from a book. Translation into Western languages only further removes the reader from the emotional depth and lyrical flow of the original Arabic Qurʾān. Much of the Arabic text is in rhymed prose and most of the over 6,000 verses consist of general exhortations to do good and to avoid evil, references to naturalistic imagery of the signs of God's creation, and promises of heavenly gardens and fiery hell. Only a very small proportion constitutes specific, legalistic injunctions. The stories of biblical prophets are retold in their qurʾānic versions with an emphasis on piety and strict monotheism. In fact, this is so much the case that the prophets, as described in Jewish and Christian scriptures, are almost unrecognizable when compared to the same prophets as described in the Qurʾān.

In the Qurʾān, the prophets are such extremely pious figures, their insistence on belief in the One God, the Creator of all the Heavens and the Earth and all that is in them and between them, is so strict, and they are so willing to sacrifice anything and everything to obey the commands of the Lord, that they serve as exemplary figures. They hold the bar so high that the rest of us are challenged to rise to meet their examples. By contrast, the Jewish and Christian scriptures read much like their contemporaneous Babylonian or Greek historical narratives, and many of those same prophetic figures are depicted as having the some of the worst character flaws of the most vile among us. Old Testament biblical depictions such as those describing Abraham as gaining property and wealth by concocting a deceitful scheme essentially prostituting his wife (Genesis 20:1-16), or those describing Noah as an unconscious naked drunk (Genesis 9:20-27), or describing Lot as having incestuous sexual relations with his daughters (Genesis 19:30-38), are an affront to qurʾānic sensibilities. Muslims hold God's prophets in such high esteem and exhibit for them such a deep respect that a Muslim reading such verses would be thoroughly disgusted. From the Muslim perspective, such narrations are nothing less than blasphemy.

The Qurʾān also explicitly criticizes New Testament biblical depictions of Jesus being the son of God as blasphemy of the highest order, and one which Jesus himself vehemently denies (in Q 5:116). Jesus

is deeply loved by Muslims and highly respected as one of the greatest of God's prophets. The qur'ānic depictions of Jesus emphasize the many miracles that God gave Jesus the power to perform in His name. Among the many miracles performed by Jesus in the Qur'ān are his breathing life into clay birds, healing the sick, curing leprosy and blindness, bringing the dead back to life, and making heavenly feasts instantly appear (e.g., Q 3:49 and 5:12-115). Moreover, the Qur'ān places extraordinary emphasis on perhaps the most incredible of all the miracles of Jesus: that of his miraculous birth. Ironically, the story of Mary as told in the Qur'ān includes greater detail on the immaculate conception of Jesus than exists in the Christian Bible. In fact, there is no actual description of the immaculate conception of Jesus anywhere in the Bible. Only two verses (Matthew 1:25 and Luke 2:7) mention the birth of Jesus at all, and they do so almost in passing. The exquisite detail of the qur'ānic description of Mary's physical and psychological trauma during the birth of Jesus (Q, Maryam, 19:16-34) stands in stark contrast to the insipid biblical treatment of the event as almost an afterthought. In the Qur'ān, the miraculous birth of Jesus is one of God's most magnificent miracles, and the Qur'ān describes Mary's profound suffering and emotional turmoil with a lyrical beauty and emotional intensity that is unmatched in any other work of literature.

Such a rare confluence of spiritual content and poetic style has earned the Qur'ān a unique place in the corpus of the Arabic language and, indeed, in world literature. Bearing in mind that the people of Arabia during Muḥammad's lifetime had a largely pre-literate, oral culture, one of the most significant contributions of the Qur'ān to world history is the fact that it spawned a literary, philosophical, and scientific explosion of intellectual activity. Not only did the Qur'ān help to transform a largely oral culture into a highly literate one, but the Qur'ān's emphasis on exercising one's critical faculties made what we now call 'science' a religious obligation for every believer. No other scripture, of any spiritual tradition, places such heavy emphasis, so repeatedly and so frequently, on thoughtful reasoning, on criticism of blind faith, on questioning of established dogma, and on striving in the pursuit of evidence, truth, and facts, regardless of 'the traditions of our forefathers.' This divine commandment to intellectual activity, combined with the spread of Islam out of the Arabian desert into the surrounding civilizations and the arrival of paper-making technology from China,

spawned a literary explosion the likes of which human civilization had not seen for centuries prior, and which would set the stage for the European Renaissance centuries later.

At the beginning of all this was the recited Qurʾān.[13]

[13] See H. A. R. Gibb, *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd edition (Leiden: Brill, 1954), "al-Kurʾān;" Rebecca Skreslet and Paula Youngman, *The Literature of Islam: A Guide to the Primary Sources in English Translation* (Lanham, MD: American Theological Library Association, 2006), 4-22.

I

PROPHETS & OTHER FIGURES MENTIONED IN THE QUR'ĀN

1

ĀDAM & ḤAWWĀʾ

(Adam & Eve)

The general contours of the story of the first man and woman are the same in the Qurʾān and in the book of Genesis, but there are some very important differences in the details. Other than physically, in the qurʾānic version, Adam and Eve are presented as equals in every way. There is no mention of Eve being created from Adam's rib or any other part of Adam. Instead, Adam and Eve were created "from one soul" (Q 7:189). They were both equally created by God. Eve did not succumb to temptation first and then tempt Adam. God warned both of them, together, not to approach one particular tree (without mention of what kind of fruit), then Satan, who is mentioned in the Qurʾān by name (there is no mention of any snakes) deceived both Adam and Eve. Both were deceived, together. Both were tempted, together. Both succumbed to temptation, together. Both realized their mistake, together. Both begged God's forgiveness, together. And both were forgiven by God, together (Q, al-Baqarah, 2:35-37 and al-Aʿrāf, 7:11-25). Eve was not 'punished' with pain in childbearing, nor was every woman after her. In fact, in the Qurʾān there is nothing remotely similar to the concepts of 'original sin' or 'sins of the fathers.' Whether male or female, every child is born sinless, and on the Day of Judgement every soul will be responsible for its own sins. The Qurʾān emphasizes repeatedly that no one can or will ever bear the sins of another.

One of the verses in the story of Adam and Eve in the Qurʾān includes Adam and Eve directly appealing to the Lord, together. After Satan deceived them into eating from the tree that had been forbidden

to them by God, God asked Adam and Eve rhetorically, "Did I not forbid you two from that tree and say to you two that the devil is an obvious enemy to you two?" and the first man and woman answered,

﴿ ... رَبَّنَا ظَلَمْنَا أَنفُسَنَا وَإِن لَّمْ تَغْفِرْ لَنَا وَتَرْحَمْنَا لَنَكُونَنَّ مِنَ الْخَاسِرِينَ ﴾

" … Our Lord, we have been unjust to our own souls,
and if You were not to forgive us and have mercy on us,
we would be among the losers."
(Q, al-Aʿrāf, 7:23)

2

NŪḤ

(Noah)

Noah is a major figure in the Qur'ān. He is portrayed as one of the most frustrated of God's prophets. He says,

﴿ ... رَبِّ إِنِّي دَعَوْتُ قَوْمِي لَيْلًا وَنَهَارًا ﴾
﴿ فَلَمْ يَزِدْهُمْ دُعَائِي إِلَّا فِرَارًا ﴾
﴿ وَإِنِّي كُلَّمَا دَعَوْتُهُمْ لِتَغْفِرَ لَهُمْ جَعَلُوا أَصَابِعَهُمْ فِي آذَانِهِمْ
وَاسْتَغْشَوْا ثِيَابَهُمْ وَأَصَرُّوا وَاسْتَكْبَرُوا اسْتِكْبَارًا ﴾

" … My Lord, indeed I have called to my people day and night."
"And the more I call to them the more they run away."
"And whenever I call to them so that You can forgive them,
they put their fingers in their ears
and cover themselves using their robes and act arrogantly."
(Q, Nūḥ, 71:5-7)

Despite continuous rejection, Noah persisted in preaching to the people. He urged them to stop worshipping idols and instead believe only in the One God, the unseen Creator, but they mocked and rejected him. He desperately tried to convince them of the error of their ways, but they scoffed at him and derided him. He warned them of the impending flood and they ridiculed him. The rich and powerful rallied the common people and convinced them not to abandon their pagan idols (Q, Nūḥ, 71:21-23). Noah persisted in trying to save them and brought to their attention that he had nothing to gain from them believing in the Truth, that he did what he did only for their own good.

They treated him contemptuously and brought to his attention that the few people who did believe him were the lowest and poorest of society, while none of the wealthy, powerful or influential members of society followed him. He repeated that his duty was only as a messenger from the Lord, and that he had come with a warning: that if they did not change their ways, they would be drowned in a powerful flood as punishment from the one true God. They escalated their threats against Noah and warned him that if he did not stop his preaching, they would attack him and stone him to death. Noah then called upon the Lord, saying,

﴿ ... رَبِّ إِنَّ قَوْمِي كَذَّبُونِ ﴾

﴿ فَافْتَحْ بَيْنِي وَبَيْنَهُمْ فَتْحًا وَنَجِّنِي وَمَن مَّعِيَ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴾

" … My Lord, my people have disbelieved in me."
"So make between me and them a wide gap and
save me and those with me who are among the believers."
(Q, al-Shuʿarāʾ, 26:117-118)

After desperately trying to convince his people of God's message and warning them of the flood to come, but being mocked, rejected, and threatened, Noah's prayer was answered. God commanded him to prepare for the coming flood along with a small group of believers. Noah then called unto the Lord, and said,

﴿ رَّبِّ اغْفِرْ لِي وَلِوَالِدَيَّ وَلِمَن دَخَلَ بَيْتِيَ مُؤْمِنًا وَلِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَالْمُؤْمِنَاتِ
وَلَا تَزِدِ الظَّالِمِينَ إِلَّا تَبَارًا ﴾

"My Lord, forgive me and my parents and whoever enters my home
believing, and [male] believers and [female] believers,
and don't give the unjust people anything other than destruction."
(Q, Nūḥ, 71:28)

Then rain began. The downpour was heavy and the flooding was extensive. The water kept rising. Following God's commands, Noah had already loaded the ark with animals and his small group of followers. As the waters kept rising, Noah saw his son looking for high ground. He called to his son to board the ark and be saved along with the other

believers, but his son said he would climb to the top of the mountain and be safe. Then when the waves rose as high as mountains and Noah asked God about saving his son, God commanded Noah not to ask questions about things that were beyond his understanding. Noah responded,

﴿ ... رَبِّ إِنِّي أَعُوذُ بِكَ أَنْ أَسْأَلَكَ مَا لَيْسَ لِي بِهِ عِلْمٌ ۖ
وَإِلَّا تَغْفِرْ لِي وَتَرْحَمْنِي أَكُن مِّنَ الْخَاسِرِينَ ﴾

" … My Lord, Indeed, I seek refuge with You from ever asking You about things that are beyond my knowledge, and if You were not to forgive me and have mercy on me, I would be among the losers."
(Q, Hūd, 11:47)

After the rains and flooding had finished, when the waters began to recede and land was visible again, those on the ark made preparations to land. God commanded Noah when he disembarked, to say,

﴿ ... الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ الَّذِي نَجَّانَا مِنَ الْقَوْمِ الظَّالِمِينَ﴾
﴿ ... رَّبِّ أَنزِلْنِي مُنزَلًا مُّبَارَكًا وَأَنتَ خَيْرُ الْمُنزِلِينَ ﴾

" … All praises due to God, who saved us from the unjust people."
" … My Lord, make us to land a blessed landing,
and you are the best of those who make landings."
(Q, al-Mu'minūn, 23:28-29)

3

IBRĀHĪM

(Abraham)

Abraham is arguably the most important prophet mentioned in the Qur'ān. To many who are unfamiliar with the Qur'ān, it often comes as a great surprise when they discover that Abraham is mentioned more frequently in the Qur'ān than is Muḥammad. Not only that, but, according to the Qur'ān, Abraham (not Muḥammad) was the central figure who established the devotional rituals of *islām*. Muḥammad, by contrast, was merely a messenger sent by the Lord to remind a forgetful people who had strayed far from the teachings of Abraham.

According to the Qur'ān, Abraham's faith in God began when he was just a youth. Interestingly, it was based on logical reasoning. Abraham is described as yearning for Truth, and seeking a higher power. At a time when every nation, every tribe, and sometimes, every household had their own gods and made idols and figurines to represent them, Abraham became disillusioned with the notion that a chunk of carved wood or stone or forged metal could be the All-powerful, All-seeing, All-knowing Creator of the entire universe! He tested some of the beliefs of the pagans around him. One night, he considered worshipping a bright star, as star-worshippers did, but when the star disappeared, he was not pleased. He considered worshipping the moon as moon-worshippers did, but later that night the moon also set, and he was dissatisfied. Then when he saw the sun rising, he considered doing as the Sun-worshippers did, but at the end of the day, the sun set and Abraham was disappointed (Q, al-Anʿām, 6:76-78).

The Qur'ān describes multiple occasions when Abraham questioned his father and his people as to why they were worshipping idol statues (e.g., (Q, al-Anʿām, 6:74). Abraham asked them, "Do they hear you when you call to them? Or do they benefit you or harm you in

any way?" (Q, al-Shuʿarāʾ, 26:72-73). The people answered that they were just worshipping the same way that their forefathers did before them. Then Abraham said to them, "Don't you see what you are worshipping? You and your forefathers before you? They are enemies to me and to the Lord of the worlds. The One who created me and who guides me, the One who feeds me and quenches my thirst, and when I become sick, He heals me, and the One who makes me to die and to live, and the One who, I hope, will forgive my faults on the Day of Judgement" (Q, al-Shuʿarāʾ, 26:75-82). Then the young Abraham called to the Lord, saying,

﴿ رَبِّ هَبْ لِي حُكْمًا وَأَلْحِقْنِي بِالصَّالِحِينَ ﴾
﴿ وَاجْعَل لِّي لِسَانَ صِدْقٍ فِي الْآخِرِينَ ﴾
﴿ وَاجْعَلْنِي مِن وَرَثَةِ جَنَّةِ النَّعِيمِ ﴾
﴿ وَاغْفِرْ لِأَبِي ... ﴾
﴿ وَلَا تُخْزِنِي يَوْمَ يُبْعَثُونَ ﴾

"My Lord, grant me wisdom and join me with the righteous,"
"And make me spoken of honorably among later generations,"
"And make me among those who inherit the gardens of tranquility,"
"And forgive my father…"
"And do not make me disgraced
on the Day they will be resurrected."
(Q, al-Shuʿarāʾ, 26:83-87)

Abraham's conflicted relationship with his pagan idol-worshipping father is a recurring theme in the Qurʾān, which highlights Abraham's pain at his inability to save his beloved father from the fires of hell, but at the same time being unable to accept his father's insistence that the worship of their people's idols is legitimate. This tension is all the more powerful when considering that the Qurʾān emphasizes repeatedly the importance of obeying one's parents. In fact, the Qurʾān is so emphatic on that point that the only exception that God allows for disobeying our parents is if they force us to believe in gods other than God (Q, Luqmān, 31:15).

Despite Abraham's best efforts, he was unable to convince his father of the truth that only God was worthy of worship. He and a small group of believers eventually separated from their people and homeland. Abraham said to his father that he would ask God's forgiveness for him, but that he (Abraham) was unable to protect his father from God's wrath as long as he continued to worship idols (Q, al-Mumtaḥanah, 60:4). Abraham then said,

﴿ ... رَّبَّنَا عَلَيْكَ تَوَكَّلْنَا وَإِلَيْكَ أَنَبْنَا وَإِلَيْكَ الْمَصِيرُ ﴾

﴿ رَبَّنَا لَا تَجْعَلْنَا فِتْنَةً لِّلَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا وَاغْفِرْ لَنَا رَبَّنَا ۖ إِنَّكَ أَنتَ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ ﴾

" … Our Lord, in You we place our trust, and to You we turn,
and to You is the final destination."
"Our Lord, do not make us a target for the disbelievers,
and forgive us, our Lord.
Indeed, You are the Dear, the Wise."
(Q, al-Mumtaḥanah, 60:4-5)

Abraham left his father and his idol-worshipping people. He traveled the land, following the commands of the Lord and preaching the faith of One God. As he got older, he called unto the Lord and requested a child, saying,

﴿ رَبِّ هَبْ لِي مِنَ الصَّالِحِينَ ﴾

"My Lord, grant me [a child who will be]
from among the righteous."
(Q, al-Ṣāffāt, 37:100)

The Lord heard Abraham's prayer and granted him a righteous son, who was named Ishmael. As in the Old Testament, Abraham traveled the lands building altars to the Lord (e.g., Genesis 12:7-8 and 13:15). According to the Qur'ān, the first altar to the One God that Abraham built was in the valley described in the Old Testament (Genesis 16 and 17), where Ishmael's mother, Hagar, having run out of food and water in the middle of the desert valley, began to despair of witnessing the death of her baby. She set the baby Ishmael down on the barren sands,

raised her voice to the heavens, and cried (Genesis 12:16).[14] An angel of the Lord appeared to her and comforted her, while a spring of fresh water appeared where the boy sat. The Hebrew word '*bakah*' means 'to weep, to cry.' In Arabic, the word for "she cried" is '*bakat.*' The ancient name for this place was 'Bakkah' (Q, Āl 'Imrān, 3:96). With the passage of time, the 'b' came to be pronounced 'm' and 'Bakkah' eventually came to be called 'Makkah' (in English, Mecca).

According to the Qur'ān, God commanded Abraham to build the first holy House of God in that desert valley, next to the holy well of water that sprang miraculously beneath the baby Ishmael. Abraham began to build this first altar to the One God, and as Ishmael grew, he began to help his father build the simple square structure. As they built the first holy House of God in the uninhabited desert valley, Abraham called unto the Lord and said,

﴿ ... رَبِّ ٱجْعَلْ هَٰذَا بَلَدًا ءَامِنًا وَٱرْزُقْ أَهْلَهُۥ مِنَ ٱلثَّمَرَٰتِ
مَنْ ءَامَنَ مِنْهُم بِٱللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ ...﴾
﴿ ... رَبَّنَا تَقَبَّلْ مِنَّاۖ إِنَّكَ أَنتَ السَّمِيعُ الْعَلِيمُ ﴾
﴿ رَبَّنَا وَاجْعَلْنَا مُسْلِمَيْنِ لَكَ وَمِن ذُرِّيَّتِنَا أُمَّةً مُّسْلِمَةً لَّكَ
وَأَرِنَا مَنَاسِكَنَا وَتُبْ عَلَيْنَاۖ إِنَّكَ أَنتَ التَّوَّابُ الرَّحِيمُ ﴾
﴿ رَبَّنَا وَابْعَثْ فِيهِمْ رَسُولًا مِّنْهُمْ يَتْلُو عَلَيْهِمْ آيَاتِكَ وَيُعَلِّمُهُمُ
الْكِتَابَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ وَيُزَكِّيهِمْ ۚ إِنَّكَ أَنتَ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ ﴾

"… My Lord, make this a peaceful land
and bless its people with the fruits [of the Earth]
for whoever believes in God and in the Last Day … "
" … Our Lord, accept this from us.
Indeed, You are the All-Hearing, the All-Knowing."
"Our Lord, make [the two of us] *muslim*s to You, and from among our descendants a nation of *muslim*s to You and show us our ritual devotions

[14] Special thanks to Andrew Lane, who highlighted this connection during his presentation at the University of London's School of Oriental and African Studies 2003 conference, "Qur'ān: Text, Translation, Interpretation."

and accept our repentance, indeed You are the Most Accepting of Repentance, the Most Merciful."
"Our Lord, send to them a messenger from among them who recites to them Your signs and teaches them the book and wisdom and purify them. Indeed, You are the Dear, the Wise."
(Q, al-Baqarah, 2:126-129)

On another occasion, Abraham again prayed and called unto the Lord, saying,

﴿ ... رَبِّ اجْعَلْ هَٰذَا الْبَلَدَ آمِنًا وَاجْنُبْنِي وَبَنِيَّ أَن نَّعْبُدَ الْأَصْنَامَ ﴾
﴿ رَبِّ إِنَّهُنَّ أَضْلَلْنَ كَثِيرًا مِّنَ النَّاسِ ۖ
فَمَن تَبِعَنِي فَإِنَّهُ مِنِّي ۖ وَمَنْ عَصَانِي فَإِنَّكَ غَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ ﴾
﴿ رَبَّنَا إِنِّي أَسْكَنتُ مِن ذُرِّيَّتِي بِوَادٍ غَيْرِ ذِي زَرْعٍ عِندَ بَيْتِكَ الْمُحَرَّمِ
رَبَّنَا لِيُقِيمُوا الصَّلَاةَ فَاجْعَلْ أَفْئِدَةً مِّنَ النَّاسِ تَهْوِي إِلَيْهِمْ
وَارْزُقْهُم مِّنَ الثَّمَرَاتِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَشْكُرُونَ ﴾
﴿ رَبَّنَا إِنَّكَ تَعْلَمُ مَا نُخْفِي وَمَا نُعْلِنُ ۗ
وَمَا يَخْفَىٰ عَلَى اللَّهِ مِن شَيْءٍ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَلَا فِي السَّمَاءِ ﴾
﴿ الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ الَّذِي وَهَبَ لِي ... إِنَّ رَبِّي لَسَمِيعُ الدُّعَاءِ ﴾
﴿ رَبِّ اجْعَلْنِي مُقِيمَ الصَّلَاةِ وَمِن ذُرِّيَّتِي ۚ رَبَّنَا وَتَقَبَّلْ دُعَاءِ ﴾
﴿ رَبَّنَا اغْفِرْ لِي وَلِوَالِدَيَّ وَلِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ يَوْمَ يَقُومُ الْحِسَابُ ﴾

" … My Lord, make this a peaceful land and keep me and my children away from the worship of idols."
"My Lord, they (the idols) have led astray many from among the people, so whoever follows me, then he is from me, and whoever is against me, then You are the Most Forgiving, the Most Merciful."
"My Lord, I have settled from among my family in a barren desert valley, next to Your Holy House, my Lord, so that they may perform the prayer, so make the hearts of people incline towards them, and

bless them with fruits [of the Earth]
so that they may be thankful."
"Our Lord, indeed, You know what we keep hidden and what we make
public, and there is nothing that is hidden from God,
neither on Earth nor in the heavens."
"All praise is due to the Lord who has blessed me …
Indeed, my Lord hears all prayers."
"My Lord, make me one who performs [ritual] prayers,
and also my descendants, My Lord, accept my invocation."
"My lord, forgive me and my parents
and the believers on the Day of Reckoning."
(Q, Ibrāhīm, 14:35-41)

The first altar to the one God was built by Abraham with the help of his son, Ishmael and stood as a simple, square structure, without any decoration or adornment, near the well that God sprang miraculously from the desert sands. People passing by on routes through the desert began to detour towards the first Holy House of God and the nearby spring, both to worship the One God of Abraham and to drink from the holy spring. Some stayed, and a small village developed. When Abraham's wife Hagar died, she was buried near the shrine, and when Ishmael died, he was buried next to his mother. The square shrine has stood on the same spot since the time of Abraham and has been restored and strengthened and rebuilt many times since Abraham and Ishmael first built the original foundations. Jews, Christians, and others who believed in the One God of Abraham visited the shrine and prayed there for thousands of years before Islam. Since the time of Muḥammad, Muslims have faced in the direction of this, the very first altar built to the Lord, every day during their prayers. Muslims are commanded to visit the shrine at least once in their lifetimes (if they are physically and financially able) to perform the pilgrimage recreating the rituals commanded to Abraham. The well, now called *zamzam*, still produces water, quenching the thirst of pilgrims visiting the shrine to this day.

4

LŪṬ

(Lot)

When Abraham left his idol-worshipping father and the pagan people of his hometown, a small group of believers joined him and departed with him. One of those people was Abraham's nephew, Lot. After traveling with Abraham to new lands, Lot was commanded to preach the message of the One God to the people of a certain area where men engaged in relations with men. Lot preached to them the faith of the One God and warned them that their behaviors were contrary to God's commands. Just as Noah before him, he was mocked and ridiculed. After repeated failed attempts to convince the people, they began to threaten Lot and his small band of followers. Eventually, Lot requested God's protection from the people and called upon the Lord, saying,

﴿ رَبِّ نَجِّنِي وَأَهْلِي مِمَّا يَعْمَلُونَ ﴾

"My Lord, save me and my family from what they do."
(Q, al-Shuʿarāʾ, 26:169)

In another narrative, when Lot warned the people, they dared him to bring about their punishment, if he were truthful, and Lot called unto the Lord, saying,

﴿ ... رَبِّ انصُرْنِي عَلَى الْقَوْمِ الْمُفْسِدِينَ ﴾

"My Lord! Give me victory over the people who make corruption."
(Q, al-ʿAnkabūt, 29:30)

5

YŪSUF

(Joseph)

Joseph was the youngest of his father's twelve children. His siblings were envious of him. One day Joseph had a dream that he saw eleven stars, and the sun and the moon, all bowing down to him. He told his father of the dream and his father instructed Joseph not to tell any of his brothers of this dream. His brothers were so envious of Joseph that one day they decided to kill him. One of them convinced the rest that they shouldn't kill him and instead should get rid of him by throwing him in a well. They told their father that Joseph was eaten by wolves. A passing caravan stopped at the well for water and found Joseph. Then Joseph was sold as a slave. He ended up working in the house of an influential married couple.

He grew into a very handsome young man. One day, when her husband left the house, the lady of the house locked all the doors and approached Joseph to seduce him into having relations with her. Joseph was a God-fearing man and tried to escape from her, but as he ran away from her, she reached out to grab him and tore his shirt. When her husband returned, she lied and said that Joseph tried to seduce her and attacked her, but when the husband saw that Joseph's shirt was torn from behind, not from the front, he realized that it was his wife who tried to seduce Joseph and she was the one who ripped his shirt as Joseph tried to run from her. Then the women of the town began to gossip about her, so one day she invited the women to her home and laid out fruits and knives to slice the fruit. As they were all cutting their fruit, she ordered Joseph to enter the room, and when all the ladies saw how handsome Joseph was, they were all so stunned that they were not paying attention to the fruit they were cutting and ended up cutting their hands with the sharp knives. Then the lady of the house criticized all the other ladies for their gossip against her, and threatened Joseph that if he

did not have relations with her, she would put him in jail. Joseph called upon the Lord, saying,

﴿ ... رَبِّ ٱلسِّجْنُ أَحَبُّ إِلَيَّ مِمَّا يَدْعُونَنِيٓ إِلَيْهِ ۖ وَإِلَّا تَصْرِفْ عَنِّي كَيْدَهُنَّ أَصْبُ إِلَيْهِنَّ وَأَكُن مِّنَ ٱلْجَٰهِلِينَ ﴾

" … My Lord, I would prefer to go to prison than to do what they are calling me to do, and if You do not save me from their (the women's) scheme, I would incline towards them and I would be among the ignorant."
(Q, Yūsuf, 12:33)

Joseph spent years in jail. While in jail, some of the other prisoners had dreams and asked Joseph what the dreams might mean. Joseph interpreted the dreams for them. Eventually one of the prisoners was freed, forgot all about Joseph, and later ended up working in the king's palace. One day, the king had a dream that none of his advisors were able to interpret. The freed prisoner remembered Joseph and told the king about him. Joseph interpreted the king's dream correctly, and the king freed him from prison and gave him a high position. One year, when life in the countryside was harsh and food was scarce, Joseph's brothers came to the city but did not recognize Joseph. He didn't reveal his identity to them and instead developed a plan to teach them a lesson and to be reunited with his father. Eventually, he revealed to them that he was their youngest brother, Joseph. Their father, who had gone blind from grief, miraculously regained his sight when he learned that Joseph was still alive.

Eventually, the entire family came to the city and was reunited with Joseph, who now held a high official position in the king's government. All his eleven brothers and his mother and father saw Joseph blessed in his powerful position and bowed down before him, and Joseph and his father witnessed the fulfilment of the dream that Joseph had as a child. In the end, when all was said and done, Joseph called to the Lord, saying,

﴿ رَبِّ قَدْ آتَيْتَنِي مِنَ الْمُلْكِ وَعَلَّمْتَنِي مِن تَأْوِيلِ الْأَحَادِيثِ ۚ فَاطِرَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ أَنتَ وَلِيِّي فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ ۖ تَوَفَّنِي مُسْلِمًا وَأَلْحِقْنِي بِالصَّالِحِينَ ﴾

"My Lord, You have given me some power and You have taught me the interpretation of dreams, Creator of the Heavens and the Earth, You are my protector in this world and in the hereafter, let me die as a *muslim* and join me with the righteous."

(Q, Yūsuf, 12:101)

6

SHUʿAYB

(Possibly Jethro)

Scholars dispute whether the Shuʿayb of the Qurʾān is biblical Jethro, or an earlier figure in the history of the land of Midyan. Because both the biblical figure and the qurʾānic figure are reported to have been from Midyan, some believe they were the same person. Other scholars believe that Shuʿayb was an ancient prophet of the people of Midyan and the fact that the biblical Jethro was also from Midyan is merely coincidental. Shuʿayb is mentioned in the Qurʾān by name, presumably as an ancient prophet long before the time of Moses, while Jethro (the father-in-law of Moses) is mentioned in the Qurʾān anonymously. Moreover, the Arabic word for Jethro is Yathrūn. These facts together make it more likely that the qurʾānic Shuʿayb and the biblical Jethro were two different people.

As with many other qurʾānic prophets, Shuʿayb preached the message of the One God to a community of idol-worshiping pagans. As with so many other similar examples, only a small minority of believers followed the prophet and tensions with the unbelieving majority rose. When matters escalated and the disbelievers threatened Shuʿayb and the small group of believers following him, he called upon the Lord saying,

﴿ ... رَبَّنَا افْتَحْ بَيْنَنَا وَبَيْنَ قَوْمِنَا بِالْحَقِّ وَأَنتَ خَيْرُ الْفَاتِحِينَ ﴾

" … Our Lord, separate between us and our people based on Truth, and You are the best of those who distinguish the Truth."

(Q, al-Aʿrāf, 7:89)

7

MŪSÁ

(Moses)

Moses holds a unique place among the prophets of God described in the Qur'ān, and it has earned him the nickname '*kalīm* Allāh,' The One Who Spoke with God. Many other prophets were blessed by the Lord to perform miracles (e.g., the many miracles performed by Jesus), some people received messages from the Lord by way of angels (e.g., Abraham, Lot, and Mary), and some were blessed to hear the voice of the Lord directly (e.g., Abraham). Adam spoke with God, but that was while Adam was still in Heaven, before there were any humans on Earth. According to the Qur'ān, Moses was the only one among all of God's prophets here on Earth to have been granted by God the privilege of repeatedly engaging in conversations directly with God Himself. The Qur'ān describes multiple such occasions in which Moses speaks with God directly, and God responds directly, with the two interacting in direct conversation back and forth.

Moses was also blessed with miracles, and he was protected by God his entire life. The Lord watched over Moses even as a baby, when his mother was forced to separate from her newborn son, as he was placed in a basket and floated down the river until he was discovered by the women at the pharaoh's palace, and then adopted by the wife of the pharaoh. God watched over Moses and ensured his safety as he grew up and became a strong, healthy young man. Years later, when he was walking through the city at night, he came across two people fighting and one asked his help. Moses intervened, got caught up in the fight, and struck the other so hard that it killed him. Moses immediately realized his mistake and called unto the Lord saying,

﴿ ... رَبِّ إِنِّي ظَلَمْتُ نَفْسِي فَاغْفِرْ لِي ... ﴾

﴿ ... رَبِّ بِمَا أَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيَّ فَلَنْ أَكُونَ ظَهِيرًا لِّلْمُجْرِمِينَ ﴾

"... My Lord! Indeed, I have committed an injustice
against my own soul, so forgive me."
" ... My Lord! Because of all you have blessed me with,
I will never again help those who commit crimes."
(Q, al-Qaṣaṣ, 28:16-17)

Later, someone came rushing to Moses to warn him that people were coming for him to execute him for what he did. Moses feared that they would catch him and put him to death, so he ran away from the city. As he left, he prayed to the Lord, saying,

﴿ ... رَبِّ نَجِّنِي مِنَ ٱلْقَوْمِ ٱلظَّٰلِمِينَ ﴾

" ... My Lord, save me from the unjust people."
(Q, al-Qaṣaṣ, 28:21)

Moses escaped from the city and kept traveling to get as far as he could. When he reached a land called Midyan, he came across two young ladies who needed help with their flocks. Moses kindly helped them with their flocks, then after his hard work, went to sit under the shade of a tree and rest. There he called to the Lord, saying,

﴿ ... رَبِّ إِنِّي لِمَآ أَنزَلْتَ إِلَيَّ مِنْ خَيْرٍ فَقِيرٌ ﴾

" ... My Lord, indeed, I am in need of
any goodness that you can send down to me.
(Q, al-Qaṣaṣ, 28:24)

After the ladies returned home and told their father about the man who helped them when they were in need, he told them to go and invite Moses to the family home. Moses accepted the invitation and, after they got to know each other, the man (biblical Jethro) invited Moses to stay with them for a while. He even offered one of his daughters for Moses to marry. Moses ended up marrying and living safely with his new family in Midyan for years.

One day, God called to Moses and commanded him to begin his prophetic mission. Moses was commanded to go back to Egypt, and confront the pharaoh to demand the freedom of his people. Moses feared for his life, knowing that he was wanted there on charges of murder. The Lord reassured Moses that He would protect him. Moses then made some requests to the Lord saying,

﴿... رَبِّ اشْرَحْ لِي صَدْرِي ﴾
﴿ وَيَسِّرْ لِي أَمْرِي ﴾
﴿ وَاحْلُلْ عُقْدَةً مِّن لِّسَانِي ﴾
﴿ يَفْقَهُوا قَوْلِي ﴾
﴿ وَاجْعَل لِّي وَزِيرًا مِّنْ أَهْلِي ﴾
﴿ هَارُونَ أَخِي﴾
﴿ اشْدُدْ بِهِ أَزْرِي ﴾
﴿ وَأَشْرِكْهُ فِي أَمْرِي ﴾
﴿ كَيْ نُسَبِّحَكَ كَثِيرًا ﴾
﴿ وَنَذْكُرَكَ كَثِيرًا ﴾
﴿ إِنَّكَ كُنتَ بِنَا بَصِيرًا ﴾

" … My Lord, open up my heart,"
"and make my mission easy for me,"
"and untie the knot [tying up] my tongue,"
"so they can understand my words,"
"and make for me a supporter from my family,"
"Aaron, my brother,"
"and through him, increase my strength,"
"and make him a partner in my mission,"
"so that we can glorify You much,"
"and remember You much."
"Indeed, You see all that we do."
(Q, Ṭā Hā, 20:25-35)

Moses then began his prophetic mission and went with his brother Aaron to the palace to demand that the pharaoh believe in the message of the One God, the Lord of Abraham, and release the Children of Israel. Pharaoh's arrogance and refusal to acknowledge God resulted in some of the most famous miracles that God granted to Moses, including the light of his hand, the staff that turned into a snake, the parting of the sea, and others.

After all the miracles from God that freed them from their oppression under the pharaoh, as they traveled towards the Promised Land, the Children of Israel came to a new place and God commanded them to enter it, but they refused to listen to Moses. No matter how much he explained what God had commanded them, they refused to listen to Moses. Then Moses called to the Lord, saying,

﴿ ... رَبِّ إِنِّي لَآ أَمْلِكُ إِلَّا نَفْسِي وَأَخِي
فَٱفْرُقْ بَيْنَنَا وَبَيْنَ ٱلْقَوْمِ ٱلْفَٰسِقِينَ ﴾

" … My Lord, I have no power of anyone other than myself and my brother, so separate between us and the corrupt people."
(Q, al-Mā'idah, 5:25)

After this episode, Moses and his people continued to travel away from the land of Pharaoh and towards the Promised Land. Along the way, God commanded Moses to separate from his people and go to the mountain top to meditate and pray for forty days and forty nights. When Moses arrived at the valley at the time he was commanded, he became curious. Having heard the voice of the Lord commanding him but never having seen God, he asked God if he could be allowed to see Him. God warned Moses that he would not be able to see Him directly, but told Moses to look at a nearby mountain and that He would reveal himself to the mountain so that Moses could see what would happen if someone looked directly at God. Then, as Moses watched the mountain, when God revealed Himself to the mountain, the mere sight of the Lord made it to crumble into dust and Moses was knocked unconscious from the burst of power that came just from God revealing Himself to the mountain. When Moses recovered and realized that the mountain was not even able to bear the sight of the power and glory of the Lord, Moses said,

﴿ ... سُبْحَانَكَ تُبْتُ إِلَيْكَ وَأَنَا أَوَّلُ ٱلْمُؤْمِنِينَ﴾

" … Glory be to You! I repent to You
and I am the first of the believers."
(Q, al-Aʿrāf, 7:143)

Afterwards, Moses climbed to the mountaintop to pray and meditate on the Lord just as he was commanded. While Moses was away, the Children of Israel gathered their jewelry and made of it a golden statue of a calf to worship as an idol instead of the Lord, who just saved them from the pharaoh. When Moses returned from the mountaintop with the tablets of the Lord's commandments and saw what his people had done, he was furious with them and embarrassed that they would do something so stupid. Moses asked forgiveness for himself and for Aaron, saying,

﴿ ... رَبِّ ٱغْفِرْ لِي وَلِأَخِي وَأَدْخِلْنَا فِي رَحْمَتِكَ ۖ وَأَنتَ أَرْحَمُ ٱلرَّٰحِمِينَ ﴾

" … My Lord, forgive me and my brother and enter us into
Your mercy, and You are the Most Merciful
of all those who are merciful."
(Q, al-Aʿrāf, 7:151)

After he calmed down, Moses called upon the Lord directly and said,

﴿ ... رَبِّ لَوْ شِئْتَ أَهْلَكْتَهُم مِّن قَبْلُ وَإِيَّايَ ۖ
أَتُهْلِكُنَا بِمَا فَعَلَ السُّفَهَاءُ مِنَّا ۖ
إِنْ هِيَ إِلَّا فِتْنَتُكَ تُضِلُّ بِهَا مَن تَشَاءُ وَتَهْدِي مَن تَشَاءُ ۖ
أَنتَ وَلِيُّنَا فَاغْفِرْ لَنَا وَارْحَمْنَا ۖ وَأَنتَ خَيْرُ الْغَافِرِينَ ﴾

"My Lord! If You had wished,
you would have destroyed them along with me, before [this].
Will You destroy us because of what the fools among us have done? It is
nothing but a test from You,
You lead astray by it whomever you wish
and You guide by it whomever You wish,

You are our [Lord and master],
so forgive us and have mercy on us,
and You are the Best of all those who forgive."
(Q, al-Aʿrāf, 7:155)

Moses suffered greatly from the actions of his own people, but his prayer, above, shows that he believed that God was All-Knowing and that he (Moses) was not responsible for the 'fools' among his people. Moses continued his prophetic mission under God's watchful eye. Just as every prophet before him and after him, God would protect the believers from the fools among the people.

8

SULAYMĀN

(Solomon)

Though Solomon was young, he was blessed by God with many talents. Solomon was made king even while the previous king, Solomon's father, David, was still alive. God tested Solomon as the new king, to ensure that he stayed on the straight path. One day, God placed a corpse on Solomon's throne and when Solomon saw it, he was humbled and said,

﴿ ... رَبِّ ٱغْفِرْ لِى وَهَبْ لِى مُلْكًا لَّا يَنۢبَغِى لِأَحَدٍ مِّنۢ بَعْدِىٓ ۖ
إِنَّكَ أَنتَ ٱلْوَهَّابُ ﴾

" … My Lord, forgive me and grant me a kingdom the likes of which no one after me will have. Indeed, you are the Grantor.
(Q, Ṣād, 38:35)

Solomon's prayer was answered and he was blessed by God with many blessings. Among his loyal servants, Solomon had many skilled and powerful creatures, including not only humans, but also *jinn*s (unseen, intelligent sentient beings), and even animals. One of the many things that God blessed Solomon with was the ability to understand the language of animals. The Qur'ān mentions several instances in which Solomon communicated with animals. In one example, Solomon had a bird under his command who flew to the far-away land of Sheba and brought important news back to him (Q, al-Naml, 27:20-28). In another example, one day when he and his army were marching, some ants were on the ground in the path of Solomon and his troops. One of the ants noticed Solomon and his army coming and called out to the other ants to go back under the ground so they would not be stepped on. Solomon

overheard the ant and began laughing and smiling. Grateful for all his blessings, he called unto the Lord and said,

﴿ ... رَبِّ أَوْزِعْنِي أَنْ أَشْكُرَ نِعْمَتَكَ الَّتِي أَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيَّ وَعَلَىٰ وَالِدَيَّ وَأَنْ أَعْمَلَ صَالِحًا تَرْضَاهُ وَأَدْخِلْنِي بِرَحْمَتِكَ فِي عِبَادِكَ الصَّالِحِينَ ﴾

" … My Lord, grant me [the wisdom] to be grateful for the blessings that You have bestowed upon me and upon my parents, and to perform righteous deeds that are pleasing to You,
and make me to enter among your righteous servants."
(Q, al-Naml, 27:19)

9

YŪNUS

(Jonah)

The prophet Jonah, also known in Islamic tradition as *Dhū al-Nūn* (of the fishes, or of the whale) is mentioned in the Qur'ān a number of times. He was assigned a mission to preach the message of the One God to his people, but, as with all other prophets sent by God, was rejected and ridiculed by the people. Jonah became so frustrated by their persistent refusal that he ran away and boarded a ship to get away from them. At sea, he ended up being thrown overboard and was swallowed by a whale (or a very large fish). In the depths of the darkness Jonah called out to the Lord in repentance, saying,

﴿ ... لَّا إِلَٰهَ إِلَّا أَنتَ سُبْحَانَكَ إِنِّي كُنتُ مِنَ الظَّالِمِينَ ﴾

" … There is no god except for You, glory be to You,
indeed, I was among the unjust."
(Q, al-Anbiyā', 21:87)

He was forgiven by the Most Merciful, and, after he was brought back to land by the whale and returned safely to shore, Jonah resumed his prophetic mission as commanded by the Lord and succeeded in converting his people to believe in God (Q, al-Ṣāffāt, 37:139-148).

10

ZAKARĪYĀ

(Zechariah)

Zechariah is mentioned in the Qur'ān as the guardian of Mary, the mother of Jesus. He held a prominent position as priest of the Temple in Jerusalem. He was aging, but did not have any heirs. He prayed to the Lord for a child who could carry on his legacy as a servant of the God of Abraham. God heard his prayers and granted him a child named Yaḥyá (John), despite his old age. There are several instances in the Qur'ān in which Zechariah's narrative is recounted. In the first, Zechariah requested heirs, saying,

﴿ ... رَبِّ هَبْ لِي مِن لَّدُنكَ ذُرِّيَّةً طَيِّبَةً ۖ إِنَّكَ سَمِيعُ الدُّعَاءِ ﴾

" … My Lord, grant me, from Your grace, goodly offspring,
indeed, You are the one who hears all prayers."
(Q, Āl 'Imrān, 3:38)

In the second instance, Zechariah calls the Lord, saying,

﴿ ... رَبِّ إِنِّي وَهَنَ الْعَظْمُ مِنِّي وَاشْتَعَلَ الرَّأْسُ شَيْبًا
وَلَمْ أَكُن بِدُعَائِكَ رَبِّ شَقِيًّا ﴾

﴿ وَإِنِّي خِفْتُ الْمَوَالِيَ مِن وَرَائِي وَكَانَتِ امْرَأَتِي عَاقِرًا
فَهَبْ لِي مِن لَّدُنكَ وَلِيًّا ﴾

﴿ يَرِثُنِي وَيَرِثُ مِنْ آلِ يَعْقُوبَ ۖ وَاجْعَلْهُ رَبِّ رَضِيًّا ﴾

" … My Lord, indeed, my bones have grown weak
And my hair has grown white with age,
And I have never been, in my prayers to You, my Lord, rejected."

"And I fear having no heirs after me, and my wife is barren,
So grant me, by Your grace, an heir,"
"to inherit from me and to inherit from the family of Jacob,
And make him, my Lord, pleasing [to You]."
(Q, Maryam, 19:4-6)

In the third instance, Zechariah calls to the Lord, saying,

﴿ ... رَبِّ لَا تَذَرْنِي فَرْدًا وَأَنتَ خَيْرُ الْوَارِثِينَ ﴾

" … My Lord, do not leave me all alone [without an heir],
and You are the best of those who bequeath [to heirs]."
(Q, al-Anbiyā', 21:89)

11

THE WIFE OF ʿIMRĀN

(of Amram)

In the Qurʾān, Amram is the father of Mary, mother of Jesus. The third chapter of the Qurʾān is named after him and his family. The wife of Amram remains unnamed in the Qurʾān. She is mentioned in relation to him as his wife. In her old age, she prayed to the Lord for a child, saying,

﴿ ... رَبِّ إِنِّي نَذَرْتُ لَكَ مَا فِي بَطْنِي مُحَرَّرًا فَتَقَبَّلْ مِنِّي ۖ
إِنَّكَ أَنتَ السَّمِيعُ الْعَلِيمُ ﴾

" … My Lord, indeed, I pledge to dedicate
what is in my belly to You, so accept it from me,
indeed You are the All-Hearing, the All-Knowing.
(Q, Āl ʿImrān, 3:35)

Then, after she gave birth, she called again to the Lord and said,

﴿ ... رَبِّ إِنِّي وَضَعْتُهَا أُنثَىٰ وَاللَّهُ أَعْلَمُ بِمَا وَضَعَتْ وَلَيْسَ الذَّكَرُ كَالْأُنثَىٰ ۖ
وَإِنِّي سَمَّيْتُهَا مَرْيَمَ وَإِنِّي أُعِيذُهَا بِكَ وَذُرِّيَّتَهَا مِنَ الشَّيْطَانِ الرَّجِيمِ ﴾

" … My Lord, indeed, I have delivered a girl child, and God knows best what I have delivered, and a boy child is not like a girl child, and indeed, I have named her Maryam, and indeed, I leave her and her progeny in Your protection from the accursed Satan."
(Q, Āl ʿImrān, 3:36)

II

OTHERS MENTIONED IN THE QUR'ĀN

12

UNSPECIFIED

(Most Likely Angels)

There is a series of verses that describe "those who hold up the throne of God and those around it." They are described as glorifying and praising their Lord and believing in Him, and asking Him forgiveness for the believers. Although it is not explicitly stated, many scholars presume that those described in these verses are angels. The fact that they are holding up God's throne or in proximity to it seems to indicate that the location being described is beyond the earthly plane, presumably in Heaven. The fact that they are described as praying asking God's mercy on the believers, as though the believers are others, implies that they themselves are not among the group they describe (they do not say 'mercy on *us*). Yet they are clearly not unbelievers, since they praise their Lord and believe in Him. All these factors lead most people to believe that those described in these verses are angels. On the other hand, the Qur'ān commonly uses the word 'angels' and frequently describes them in various situations, so it is intriguing that these creatures are not explicitly referred to as being angels. In any case, the Qur'ān describes them as saying,

﴿ ... رَبَّنَا وَسِعْتَ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ رَّحْمَةً وَعِلْمًا فَاغْفِرْ
لِلَّذِينَ تَابُوا وَاتَّبَعُوا سَبِيلَكَ وَقِهِمْ عَذَابَ الْجَحِيمِ ﴾
﴿ رَبَّنَا وَأَدْخِلْهُمْ جَنَّاتِ عَدْنٍ الَّتِي وَعَدتَّهُمْ وَمَن صَلَحَ
مِنْ آبَائِهِمْ وَأَزْوَاجِهِمْ وَذُرِّيَّاتِهِمْ ۚ إِنَّكَ أَنتَ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ﴾

﴿ وَقِهِمُ السَّيِّئَاتِ ۚ وَمَن تَقِ السَّيِّئَاتِ يَوْمَئِذٍ فَقَدْ رَحِمْتَهُ ۚ
وَذَٰلِكَ هُوَ الْفَوْزُ الْعَظِيمُ ﴾

" … Our Lord, You encompass all things with Your mercy
and knowledge, so forgive those who repent and follow Your way,
and shield them from the punishment of Hell."
"Our Lord, and enter them into the gardens of Eden
that You promised to them and those who were righteous
from among their fathers, and spouses, and descendants.
Indeed, You are the Dear, the Wise."
"And shield them from evil, and whomever You shield on that day, You will
have had mercy on them, and that is the great victory."
(Q, Ghāfir, 40:7-9)

13

PHARAOH'S MAGICIANS

Unwilling to accept that the miracles performed by Moses were signs of the power of God, the Pharaoh of Egypt believed that Moses was just playing clever magic tricks. He recruited the most famous magicians of his kingdom to challenge Moses in a battle. They used optical illusions to deceive the crowd and made ropes look like slithering snakes. God commanded Moses to throw down his walking staff and it turned into a larger snake that ate the magicians' fake 'snakes.' When the magicians realized that what Moses did was truly a miracle and not just some magic trick, they understood immediately that Moses was actually a prophet sent by God, the Creator. They prostrated to the ground on their hands and knees, put their foreheads to the ground and proclaimed that they believe in "the Lord of the worlds, the Lord of Moses and Aaron." Pharaoh was so angry that he yelled at the magicians, "How dare you believe before I give you permission to believe!?" and accused them of conspiring with Moses and Aaron. Then he commanded that their hands and feet be cut off on opposite sides and that they be crucified. They responded fearlessly, "Indeed, we have been converted to our Lord, and you cannot take revenge upon us for anything other than the fact that we believed in the signs of our Lord when they came to us." The former-magicians-turned-believers then called upon the Lord directly and said,

﴿ ... رَبَّنَا أَفْرِغْ عَلَيْنَا صَبْرًا وَتَوَفَّنَا مُسْلِمِينَ ﴾

" … Our Lord, grant us an overflow of patience
and let us die as *muslims*."
(Q, al-Aʿrāf, 7:126)

14

PHARAOH'S WIFE

Like the pharaoh's magicians, the Qur'ān describes the wife of the pharaoh as being open to the Truth. When she realized the pharaoh's evil ways and became convinced of the truth of the message of Moses and Aaron, she abandoned both the pharaoh's unjust policies and the pharaoh's claim that he was a god. She repented to the one true God and said,

﴿ ... رَبِّ ابْنِ لِي عِندَكَ بَيْتًا فِي الْجَنَّةِ وَنَجِّنِي
مِن فِرْعَوْنَ وَعَمَلِهِ وَنَجِّنِي مِنَ الْقَوْمِ الظَّالِمِينَ ﴾

" … My Lord, build for me a home with You in Heaven
and save me from the pharaoh and his actions,
and save me from the unjust people."
(Q. al-Taḥrīm, 66:11)

15

SOLDIERS IN THE ARMY WITH DĀWŪD

(with David)

The Qur'ān describes the prelude to the battle in which young David fought with the fearsome Goliath. In the famous story, Goliath was a strong warrior who struck fear into the hearts of his opponents and easily crushed them in battle. People were afraid to fight him for fear of being killed. The soldiers in the army with David, when their army approached the army that had Goliath in their ranks, feared for their lives. They called to God, saying,

﴿ ... رَبَّنَا أَفْرِغْ عَلَيْنَا صَبْرًا وَثَبِّتْ أَقْدَامَنَا وَانصُرْنَا عَلَى الْقَوْمِ الْكَافِرِينَ ﴾

" … Our Lord, give us an overflow of patience, and give us the strength to
stand our ground, and make us victorious
over the unbelieving people."
(Q, al-Baqarah, 2:250)

Unlike the others in army, David was brave and had strong faith in God. Even though he was smaller, he was able to use his sling to take down the mighty Goliath.

16

THE YOUTHS IN THE CAVE

(The Seven Sleepers of Ephesus)

The story of the seven sleepers also appears in the Qur'ān, where it is referenced more vaguely, and explicitly described as a narrative the details of which the audience should already be familiar with. It is the story of a group of youths who were persecuted by pagan Romans for their faith in God. They escaped capture and hid in a cave. God put them into a deep sleep for hundreds of years, and they awakened feeling as though they were only asleep for a day or so. Their world had changed and they were no longer fugitives. They were protected and guided by the Lord. In the qur'ānic narrative, when the young men reached the cave, they said,

﴿ ... رَبَّنَا آتِنَا مِن لَّدُنكَ رَحْمَةً وَهَيِّئْ لَنَا مِنْ أَمْرِنَا رَشَدًا ﴾

" … Our Lord, grant us, from You, mercy,
And provide us right guidance in our affair."
(Q, al-Kahf, 18:10)

After the many years that they spent asleep in the cave, they awakened and realized what happened, and their faith in God was strengthened even more than before they fell asleep. They said, "Our Lord is the Lord of the Heavens and the Earth, we will never call upon any god other than Him, and if we were to do so, it would be an extreme lie." (Q, al-Kahf, 18:14).

17

ANONYMOUS BELIEVERS

The following are some additional verses in which anonymous believers call upon the Lord. They are presented here with very little contextual information. Source citations provided after the verses and their translations allow the interested reader to locate the original verses in context and gather as much background as desired. Verses are quoted here in the order in which they appear in the qur'ānic text.

The Qur'ān mentions that there are some people who request from God the bounties of this world, but they get no share of the hereafter. By contrast, there are those who call upon the Lord, saying,

﴿ ... رَبَّنَا آتِنَا فِي الدُّنْيَا حَسَنَةً وَفِي الْآخِرَةِ حَسَنَةً وَقِنَا عَذَابَ النَّارِ ﴾

" … Our Lord, give us goodness in this world and in the hereafter also goodness, and shield us from the punishment of the fire."
(Q, al-Baqarah, 2:201)

The Qur'ān describes the Prophet and those who believe in his message as believing in God and His angels and His scriptures and His prophets, saying that they do not differentiate between any of His prophets, and saying,

﴿ ... سَمِعْنَا وَأَطَعْنَا ۖ غُفْرَانَكَ رَبَّنَا وَإِلَيْكَ الْمَصِيرُ ﴾

﴿ ... رَبَّنَا لَا تُؤَاخِذْنَا إِن نَّسِينَا أَوْ أَخْطَأْنَا ۚ رَبَّنَا وَلَا تَحْمِلْ عَلَيْنَا إِصْرًا كَمَا حَمَلْتَهُ عَلَى الَّذِينَ مِن قَبْلِنَا ۚ رَبَّنَا وَلَا تُحَمِّلْنَا مَا لَا طَاقَةَ لَنَا بِهِ ۖ وَاعْفُ عَنَّا وَاغْفِرْ لَنَا وَارْحَمْنَا ۚ أَنتَ مَوْلَانَا فَانصُرْنَا عَلَى الْقَوْمِ الْكَافِرِينَ ﴾

" … We hear and we obey, Your forgiveness, our Lord,
and to You is the final destination."
"Our Lord, do not hold it against us if we forget or make a mistake. Our Lord, do not place a burden upon us like the burdens You placed upon those before us. Our Lord, do not place a burden upon us that we have no strength to bear. And pardon us, and forgive us, and have mercy on us, You are our Master,
so help us against the unbelieving people."
(Q, al-Baqarah, 2:285-286)

The Qur'ān describes those who have firm knowledge as believing in all the revelations from the Lord and saying,

﴿ رَبَّنَا لَا تُزِغْ قُلُوبَنَا بَعْدَ إِذْ هَدَيْتَنَا
وَهَبْ لَنَا مِن لَّدُنكَ رَحْمَةً ۚ إِنَّكَ أَنتَ الْوَهَّابُ ﴾

﴿ رَبَّنَا إِنَّكَ جَامِعُ النَّاسِ لِيَوْمٍ لَّا رَيْبَ فِيهِ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُخْلِفُ الْمِيعَادَ ﴾

"Our Lord, do not make our hearts veer [off course] after having guided us,
and grant us mercy from You,
indeed You are the best Grantor."
"Our Lord, You are the One who will gather all humankind
for the Day in which there is no doubt.
Indeed, God does not break His promise."
(Q, Āl 'Imrān, 3:8-9)

The Qur'ān describes the God-fearing believers as inheriting eternal Paradise and saying,

﴿ ... رَبَّنَا إِنَّنَا آمَنَّا فَاغْفِرْ لَنَا ذُنُوبَنَا وَقِنَا عَذَابَ النَّارِ ﴾

" … Our Lord, indeed, we believed, so forgive us our sins and shield us
from the punishment of the fire."
(Q, Āl 'Imrān, 3:16)

The Qur'ān describes the believers who remained steadfast and did not run away, when God's prophets told them to stand their ground in battle, as persevering with faith in their hearts and saying,

﴿ ... رَبَّنَا اغْفِرْ لَنَا ذُنُوبَنَا وَإِسْرَافَنَا فِي أَمْرِنَا وَثَبِّتْ أَقْدَامَنَا
وَانصُرْنَا عَلَى الْقَوْمِ الْكَافِرِينَ ﴾

" … Our Lord, forgive us our sins and our excesses in our affairs, and make us to stand our ground and make us victorious
against the unbelieving people."
(Q, Āl 'Imrān, 3:147)

The Qur'ān describes those who remember God standing and sitting and laying on their sides, and who ponder deeply the creation of the Heavens and the Earth, saying,

﴿ ... رَبَّنَا مَا خَلَقْتَ هَٰذَا بَاطِلًا سُبْحَانَكَ فَقِنَا عَذَابَ النَّارِ ﴾
﴿ رَبَّنَا إِنَّكَ مَن تُدْخِلِ النَّارَ فَقَدْ أَخْزَيْتَهُ ۖ وَمَا لِلظَّالِمِينَ مِنْ أَنصَارٍ ﴾
﴿ رَّبَّنَا إِنَّنَا سَمِعْنَا مُنَادِيًا يُنَادِي لِلْإِيمَانِ أَنْ آمِنُوا بِرَبِّكُمْ فَآمَنَّا ۚ رَبَّنَا فَاغْفِرْ لَنَا ذُنُوبَنَا
وَكَفِّرْ عَنَّا سَيِّئَاتِنَا وَتَوَفَّنَا مَعَ الْأَبْرَارِ ﴾
﴿ رَبَّنَا وَآتِنَا مَا وَعَدتَّنَا عَلَىٰ رُسُلِكَ وَلَا تُخْزِنَا يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ ۗ
إِنَّكَ لَا تُخْلِفُ الْمِيعَادَ ﴾

"Our Lord, You have not created this without a reason,
Glory be to You, so shield us from the punishment of the fire."
"Or Lord, indeed whomever You make enter the fire,
You make them disgraced, and there are no helpers for the unjust."
"Our Lord, indeed we have heard a caller calling to faith, saying, 'believe in your Lord,' so we believed.
Our Lord, so forgive us our sins, and cover for us our misdeeds,
and when we die, let us be among the righteous."

"Our Lord, and give us what You have promised us by way of
Your messengers, and do not make us disgraced on the Day of
Resurrection, indeed You do not break Your promises."
(Q, Āl 'Imrān, 3:191-194)

The Qur'ān describes believers who sacrifice their lives in the way of God as achieving either victory or martyrdom, both of which are great rewards. True believers are those who fight in the way of God and to protect oppressed men, women, and children, and who say,

﴿ ... رَبَّنَا أَخْرِجْنَا مِنْ هَٰذِهِ الْقَرْيَةِ الظَّالِمِ أَهْلُهَا وَاجْعَل لَّنَا مِن لَّدُنكَ وَلِيًّا وَاجْعَل لَّنَا مِن لَّدُنكَ نَصِيرًا ﴾

" … Our Lord, make for us a way out of this town
whose people are unjust, and make for us, from You, a protector, and make
for us, from You, a helper."
(Q, al-Nisā', 4:75)

The Qur'ān describes the Children of Israel's fear of the pharaoh, such that many of them did not even believe Moses, except for a few faithful believers. Then when Moses said to them that if they are truly believers, they must put their faith in the Lord, the believers among them said,

﴿ ... رَبَّنَا لَا تَجْعَلْنَا فِتْنَةً لِّلْقَوْمِ الظَّالِمِينَ﴾
﴿ وَنَجِّنَا بِرَحْمَتِكَ مِنَ الْقَوْمِ الْكَافِرِينَ﴾

" … Our Lord, do not make us a tempting target
for the unjust people,"
"And save us, by Your mercy, from the unbelieving people."
(Q, Yūnus, 10:85-86)

The Qur'ān describes the unbelievers, after the Day of Judgement, burning in Hell fire, begging God for a second chance, and promising to be good if

only God would take them out of the fire, God silences them and reminds them that believers were the ones who used to say,

﴿ ... رَبَّنَا آمَنَّا فَاغْفِرْ لَنَا وَارْحَمْنَا وَأَنتَ خَيْرُ الرَّاحِمِينَ ﴾

" … Our Lord, we believe, so forgive us and have mercy on us,
and You are the Best of all those who are Merciful."
(Q, al-Mu'minūn, 23:109)

The Qur'ān describes believers who are thankful and who tread softly upon the Earth, and who, when they are confronted by ignorant people just say "peace" and walk away, and those who spend their nights in prayer, prostrating to their Lord. The Qur'ān describes them as saying,

﴿ ... رَبَّنَا اصْرِفْ عَنَّا عَذَابَ جَهَنَّمَ ۖ إِنَّ عَذَابَهَا كَانَ غَرَامًا ﴾
﴿ إِنَّهَا سَاءَتْ مُسْتَقَرًّا وَمُقَامًا ﴾

" … Our Lord, keep away from us the punishment of Hell,
indeed Your punishment is torment."
"Indeed, it is a terrible place to stay."
(Q, al-Furqān, 25:65-66)

The Qur'ān continues to describe believers, saying that they do not throw away their money and also aren't stingy with it, but follow a middle path, and they do not call upon any gods other than God, and they do not commit murder, nor do they commit adultery. It describes those who do not bear false witness, and who speak with dignified manners, and those who, when they are reminded of the verses of the Lord, do not act like they don't hear or see the signs, and those who say,

﴿ ... رَبَّنَا هَبْ لَنَا مِنْ أَزْوَاجِنَا وَذُرِّيَّاتِنَا قُرَّةَ أَعْيُنٍ وَاجْعَلْنَا لِلْمُتَّقِينَ إِمَامًا ﴾

" … Our Lord, grant us joy to our eyes
from among our spouses and our progeny,
and make of us good examples for the God-fearing."
(Q, al-Furqān, 25:74)

They are the ones who will be rewarded for their patience with the best reward, which will be everlasting.

The Qurʾān commands all mankind towards goodness and kindness to our parents, especially mothers, highlighting the difficulties and hardships experienced by our mothers during pregnancy, and during delivery, and during raising us as children. The Qurʾān describes true believers as those who, when they reach adulthood and mature, are the ones who say,

﴿ ... رَبِّ أَوْزِعْنِي أَنْ أَشْكُرَ نِعْمَتَكَ الَّتِي أَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيَّ وَعَلَىٰ وَالِدَيَّ وَأَنْ أَعْمَلَ صَالِحًا تَرْضَاهُ وَأَصْلِحْ لِي فِي ذُرِّيَّتِي ۖ إِنِّي تُبْتُ إِلَيْكَ وَإِنِّي مِنَ الْمُسْلِمِينَ﴾

" … My Lord, grant me [the wisdom] to be grateful for the blessings that You have bestowed upon me and upon my parents, and to perform righteous deeds that are pleasing to You, and make for me my progeny also righteous, indeed, I repent to You,
and indeed, I am among the *muslim*s."
(Q, al-Aḥqāf, 46:15)

The Qurʾān describes believers who survived persecution at the hands of the pagan idol-worshippers and managed to settle in a place of safety. Then as new immigrants came and joined them in their new, safe community, the immigrants who had nothing and barely escaped with their lives, were welcomed with open arms by the believers who were already settled in safety. Sometimes the believers not only shared their accommodations and food with the immigrants, but even gave the immigrants the best of their own accommodations and food, welcoming them with open arms and warm hearts and providing every available comfort. The Qurʾān describes the immigrant believers as calling upon the Lord, saying,

﴿ ... رَبَّنَا اغْفِرْ لَنَا وَلِإِخْوَانِنَا الَّذِينَ سَبَقُونَا بِالْإِيمَانِ وَلَا تَجْعَلْ فِي قُلُوبِنَا غِلًّا لِّلَّذِينَ آمَنُوا رَبَّنَا إِنَّكَ رَءُوفٌ رَّحِيمٌ ﴾

" … Our Lord, forgive us and our brothers who came before us in faith, and do not allow any ill will in our hearts towards those who believe, our Lord, indeed You are the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful.
(Q, al-Ḥashr, 59:10)

The Qur'ān describes God as forgiving all those who repent, and covering up their past misdeeds, and on the Last Day, entering them into heavenly gardens underneath which rivers flow. It describes the prophets and true believers as being surrounded by the 'light' of faith, and saying,

﴿ ... رَبَّنَا أَتْمِمْ لَنَا نُورَنَا وَاغْفِرْ لَنَا ۖ إِنَّكَ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ ﴾

" … Our Lord, perfect for us our light, and forgive us, indeed You are able to do all things."
(Q, al-Taḥrīm, 66:8)

18

QUL…

(Say…)

One of the most notable stylistic aspects of the Qur'ān is its use of rhetorical response imperatives. These are commands (*qul…*, say…) to respond in a certain way when confronted with specific rhetorical claims made by those who do not believe. Often, these verses follow other verses describing pagans challenging the prophets of God, or those of other faiths challenging Muḥammad, for proof that their messages are truly from God. Context reveals that some of these verses are clearly addressed to Muḥammad himself, while others might be addressed generally to all God's creation. Depending on one's perspective, they may even be seen as doing both simultaneously. There are so many verses in the Qur'ān using such imperatives that the list in ʿAbd al-Bāqī's concordance, *al-Muʃam al-mufahras*, spans seven pages.[15] Some of the Qur'ān's response imperatives meet our inclusion criteria (see p. vii) for verses that are invocations calling upon the Lord. They are presented here with very little contextual information. Source citations provided after the verses and their translations allow the interested reader to locate the original verses in context and gather as much background as desired. Aside from some exceptional examples provided at the end of this section, verses are quoted here in the order in which they appear in the qur'ānic text.

[15] Muḥammad Fu'ād ʿAbd al-Bāqī, *al-Muʿjam al-mufahras li-alfāẓ al-qur'ān al-karīm* (n.p.: Dār al-Fikr, 1994), 725-731.

The Qur'ān places an extraordinary emphasis on the Fifth Commandment (Exodus 20:12) and the honoring of parents. With the exception of the First Commandment, which is the central theme of the Qur'ān, there are few things more stressed in the Qur'ān. After highlighting God's command that parents must be honored, and after forbidding 'huffing and puffing,' complaining, and yelling at them, and after commanding that we address them respectfully and humble ourselves in service to them, we are told to say,

﴿ ... رَّبِّ ارْحَمْهُمَا كَمَا رَبَّيَانِي صَغِيرًا ﴾

"… My Lord, forgive [the two of] them,
as they [both] raised me in my youth."
(Q, al-Isrā', 17:24)

After several verses commanding the required daily prayers and additional late night prayers for the most devoted, the Qur'ān commands to say,

﴿ ... رَّبِّ أَدْخِلْنِي مُدْخَلَ صِدْقٍ وَأَخْرِجْنِي مُخْرَجَ صِدْقٍ
وَاجْعَل لِّي مِن لَّدُنكَ سُلْطَانًا نَّصِيرًا﴾

﴿ ... جَاءَ الْحَقُّ وَزَهَقَ الْبَاطِلُ ۚ إِنَّ الْبَاطِلَ كَانَ زَهُوقًا ﴾

" … My Lord, make me to enter an honorable entrance
and to exit an honorable exit, and make for me,
from You, an Authority and Helper."
" … The Truth has come and falsehood has been vanquished.
Indeed, falsehood is [always] vanquished."
(Q, al-Isrā', 17:80-81)

The Qur'ān frequently emphasizes the importance of relying on factual evidence and, in this verse, commands to say,

﴿ ... رَّبِّ زِدْنِي عِلْمًا ﴾

"My Lord! Increase my knowledge."
(Q, ṬāHā, 20:114)

After criticizing those who claim that God has offspring and those who claim that God is just one among many gods, the Qur'ān commands to say,

﴿ ... رَّبِّ إِمَّا تُرِيَنِّي مَا يُوعَدُونَ ﴾
﴿ رَبِّ فَلَا تَجْعَلْنِي فِي الْقَوْمِ الظَّالِمِينَ ﴾

" … My Lord, if You would show me that [punishment] which they are promised,"
"My Lord, then do not make me be among the unjust people."
(Q, al-Mu'minūn, 23:93-94)

The Qur'ān then states that God is certainly able to show whatever He wants, and that He knows all, including what the disbelievers claim. Then it commands to say,

﴿ ... رَّبِّ أَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنْ هَمَزَاتِ الشَّيَاطِينِ ﴾
﴿ وَأَعُوذُ بِكَ رَبِّ أَن يَحْضُرُونِ ﴾

" … My Lord, I seek refuge with You from the incitement of the devils."
"And I seek refuge with You, my Lord, from their being in my presence.
(Q, al-Mu'minūn, 23:97-98)

The Qur'ān emphasizes that God is the King and the Truth, and that there are no other gods besides Him, the Lord of the honorable throne. After stating that those who worship other gods beside God have no proof

that there are any other gods, and after stating that they will be punished by God, the Qur'ān commands to say,

﴿ ... رَّبِّ اغْفِرْ وَارْحَمْ وَأَنتَ خَيْرُ الرَّاحِمِينَ ﴾

" … My Lord, forgive and have mercy,
and You are the Best of all those who have mercy."
(Q, al-Mu'minūn, 23:118)

The first word of the following verse can be read in two different ways, depending on which vowel is used. It can be read as "*qāla*" or as "*qul*."[16] The first reading would mean "He said…," while the second would be an imperative, "Say…," and would be consistent with the previous verses in this section. Context reveals that this is the final verse in a string that includes another "*qul…*" ("say…"), making it more likely that the correct reading is as a command response. After being told to say to the disbelievers that their warning has been delivered, that God knows what is said openly and what is thought silently, the Qur'ān commands to say,

﴿ ... رَبِّ ٱحْكُم بِٱلْحَقِّ ۗ وَرَبُّنَا ٱلرَّحْمَٰنُ ٱلْمُسْتَعَانُ عَلَىٰ مَا تَصِفُونَ ﴾

" … My Lord, judge based on Truth, and our Lord,
the Most Merciful, the One who is relied upon
against that which they [the disbelievers] describe."
(Q, al-Anbiyā', 21:112)

The next two examples are not quite invocations. They are declarative sentences, but they are included in this listing of 'Say…' verses because they

[16] For a closer look at this phenomenon in the variant readings of the Qur'ān, see: Ali J. Hussain, *The Living Qur'ān* (Berlin: DeGruyter, 2023), 40-41 and 262. This particular discrepancy is an excellent example of a variant which seems to be more accurate in the less popular and less widespread Readings of Warsh, Qālūn, and al-Dūrī, than the more popular Reading of Ḥafṣ from 'Āṣim that is ubiquitous among the qur'āns of today.

remain direct addresses to the Lord.[17] The first example, after describing God's justice on the Day of Judgement, commands to say,

﴿ ... اللَّهُمَّ مَالِكَ الْمُلْكِ تُؤْتِي الْمُلْكَ مَن تَشَاءُ وَتَنزِعُ الْمُلْكَ مِمَّن تَشَاءُ وَتُعِزُّ مَن تَشَاءُ وَتُذِلُّ مَن تَشَاءُ ۖ بِيَدِكَ الْخَيْرُ ۖ إِنَّكَ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ ﴾

" … O, God, Master of all authority, You give authority to whomever You please and you take away authority from whomever You please and You Grace whomever You please and you abase whomever You please. In Your hands is all goodness.
Indeed, You are able to do all things."
(Q, Āl 'Imrān, 3:26)

In the second such example, God is again addressed directly with a simple declarative statement presented as fact. After another series of verses criticizing those who worship other gods beside God, the Qur'ān commands to say,

﴿ ... اللَّهُمَّ فَاطِرَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ عَالِمَ الْغَيْبِ وَالشَّهَادَةِ أَنتَ تَحْكُمُ بَيْنَ عِبَادِكَ فِي مَا كَانُوا فِيهِ يَخْتَلِفُونَ ﴾

" … O, God, Creator of the Heavens and the Earth, Knower of all that is hidden and all that is witnessed, You will judge between Your servants regarding the things about which they disagree."
(Q, al-Zumar, 39:46)

In addition to the verses we have mentioned in this section, the Qur'ān includes many other 'Say…' verses. Even though the remaining verses are not direct calls invoking the Lord, some, such as the following example, make excellent quotations to repeat in prayers and are often quoted. This example is provided here both as a sampling of such verses and as a segue to

[17] Interestingly, these are among a handful of verses in the Qur'ān that use the Arabic word '*Allāhumma*' to address God. This word is cognate with the Hebrew word '*Elohim*,' which is the biblical Hebrew word for God.

what I hope will be the next volume in this series, one dedicated to precisely these types of verses.

﴿ قُلْ إِنَّنِي هَدَانِي رَبِّي إِلَىٰ صِرَاطٍ مُّسْتَقِيمٍ دِينًا قِيَمًا مِّلَّةَ إِبْرَاهِيمَ حَنِيفًا ۚ
وَمَا كَانَ مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ ﴾

﴿ قُلْ إِنَّ صَلَاتِي وَنُسُكِي وَمَحْيَايَ وَمَمَاتِي لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ ﴾

﴿ لَا شَرِيكَ لَهُ ۖ وَبِذَٰلِكَ أُمِرْتُ وَأَنَا أَوَّلُ الْمُسْلِمِينَ ﴾

﴿ قُلْ أَغَيْرَ اللَّهِ أَبْغِي رَبًّا وَهُوَ رَبُّ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ ۚ
وَلَا تَكْسِبُ كُلُّ نَفْسٍ إِلَّا عَلَيْهَا ۚ وَلَا تَزِرُ وَازِرَةٌ وِزْرَ أُخْرَىٰ ۚ
ثُمَّ إِلَىٰ رَبِّكُم مَّرْجِعُكُمْ فَيُنَبِّئُكُم بِمَا كُنتُمْ فِيهِ تَخْتَلِفُونَ ﴾

﴿ وَهُوَ الَّذِي جَعَلَكُمْ خَلَائِفَ الْأَرْضِ وَرَفَعَ بَعْضَكُمْ فَوْقَ بَعْضٍ دَرَجَاتٍ لِّيَبْلُوَكُمْ
فِي مَا آتَاكُمْ ۗ إِنَّ رَبَّكَ سَرِيعُ الْعِقَابِ وَإِنَّهُ لَغَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ ﴾

"Say, 'Indeed, my Lord has guided me to a straight path,
an upright religion, the community of Abraham,
who believed in the One God and was not one of those
who associated other gods with Him'."
"Say, 'Indeed, my prayers and my devotions and my life
and my death are all for God, the Lord of the worlds'."
"He has no partners, and with that I have been commanded,
and I am the first of those who are *muslim*s."
"Say, 'Would I take anyone other than God as Lord, while He is the Lord
of all things, and while every soul will earn nothing but its own earnings,
and no soul will carry the weight of another, then to your Lord you will
return, and He will inform you of all the things about which you used to
disagree."
"And He is the One who made you successors on the Earth and He raised
some of you above others in rank to test you with what He has given you.
Indeed, your Lord is swift in punishment, and indeed, He is the Most
Forgiving, the Most Merciful."
(Q, al-Anʿām, 6:161-165)

OTHER INVOCATION VERSES

The following are additional qurʾānic verses in which someone calls upon God, but which are not appropriate for our purposes. They are listed here for completeness. These verses are not included in the main text because they do not meet the inclusion criteria (see p. vii). In some of them, the speakers are prophets and other religious figures, but the verses are not general enough to be used outside of their specific context. In other verses, the speakers are hypocrites, enemies of God, or even Satan, and therefore the words they direct toward God are not exemplary for believers to use as quotations in prayers. They are listed here in the following order: first, context-specific verses by prophets or other religious figures, then other contextual verses, then calls by hypocrites, followed by the calls of disbelievers, and finally calls by Satan.

Abraham:

In Q, Ibrāhīm, 14:36, Abraham talks to God about how idols and graven images have caused many people to go astray, turning them away from the belief in the One God. In Q, al-Baqarah, 2:260, Abraham asks God to show him how He brings the dead back to life.

Noah:

In Q, al-Muʾminūn, 23:26, Noah asks God to help him because the people do not believe him. In Q, Nūḥ, 71:5-28, nearly the entire chapter is an extended call from Noah to the Lord. Only a portion of it was selected for our section on Noah. In Q, Hūd, 11:45, Noah asks God about His promise to save his family, and asks about saving his son.

Moses:

In Q, al-Shuʿarāʾ, 26:12-14, Moses talks to God about how his chest is tight and his tongue is tied, and that Aaron should be sent to the pharaoh instead. In Q, ṬāHā, 20:84, Moses explains to God why he has hurried to see the Him. In Q, al-Qaṣaṣ, 28:33, Moses again tells God how worried he is about the people who are searching for him to execute him for murder.

Zechariah:

In Q, Āl ʿImrān, 3:40-41, Zechariah is surprised when he is informed that he will have a child in his old age, and asks God to give him a sign. The same episode is described again in Q, Maryam, 19:8 and Q, Maryam, 19:10.

Mary:

In Q, Āl ʿImrān, 3:47, when Mary is informed that she will bear a child, she asks God how she could possibly have a child when no man has ever touched her.

Unspecified Prophets and Messengers:

In Q, al-Zukhruf, 43:88, an unspecified prophet is described as calling to God and saying that the people to whom he is preaching continue to disbelieve. In Q, al-Furqān, 25:30, an unspecified messenger calls to God saying that his people have neglected God's message. In Q, al-Muʾminūn, 23:39, an unspecified messenger who is rejected by his people is described as calling upon God for help.

Others:

Bilqīs, queen of Sheba, is described as being amazed by the miracles with which Solomon was blessed by God. Finally, in Q, al-Naml, 27:44, she was awestruck when she discovered that what she thought was a vast pool of clear water was in fact a crystal floor. Amazed by all of God's miracles and overwhelmed by a new sense of faith, she abandoned her people's belief in pagan sun-worship and converted to belief in the One God.

Disbelievers:

In Q, al-Anfāl, 8:32, disbelievers mockingly challenge God, daring Him, if the prophet's message is true, to rain rocks onto them from the sky, or to send some other painful punishment. In Q, al-Muʾminūn, 23:99-100, the reaction of disbelievers is described, when death comes to them. They

beg God to allow them a second chance to redo their lives so they can perform good deeds, but by then, it is too late. In Q, ṬāHā, 20:125, people who turned away from the reminders of God are described as being resurrected blind. When they ask why they have been resurrected as blind while they had vision during their lifetimes, they are told that they had forgotten the signs of God, so they will now be forgotten. In Q, al-Munāfiqūn, 63:10, disbelievers are again described as on their deathbeds begging God to delay their deaths for a little bit, to give them time to spend on charity and to join the righteous.

Hypocrites:

In Q, al-Mā'idah, 5:114, the hypocrites supposedly following Jesus mockingly challenged him to convince God to send down a miracle feast, a big spread of food and drink. Jesus warned them not to push too far, but they persisted. When Jesus asked God for the miracle, He miraculously made the feast appear, and warned that whoever disbelieves after witnessing the miracle will be punished.

Satan:

In Q, Ṣād, 38:79, Satan requests that God delay his punishment until the day of Judgement. A similar episode is described in Q, al-Ḥijr, 15:36, and in Q, al-Ḥijr, 15:39, after God grants Satan's request for a reprieve, Satan tells God that he will spend the entire time tempting the children of Adam and leading them astray.

INVOCATION LITERATURE

The invocations included in this book were all verses from the Qurʾān. The literature of Islam also includes a rich and varied corpus of *duʿāʾ* (invocation) literature. The corpus includes accounts of Muḥammad's supplications, standalone works, collections, poetic rhythmic rhyming invocations called *munājāt*, and other works. In addition to the above sources, the followers of the *Ahl al-Bayt* (The Household of the Prophet) also developed a rich literary and liturgical tradition of invocation texts.

It is important to understand the historical context of their very deliberate decision to redirect their attention and focus on *duʿāʾ* literature. After the death of Muḥammad, during the civil wars of the first Islamic century, tens of thousands of the Companions of the Prophet fought and killed each other. The issue of leadership remained at the forefront of the early Islamic community's differences. Brothers fought and killed each other. Fathers, sons, uncles, and cousins fought and killed each other. The followers of ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib (Muḥammad's cousin and son-in-law, who was raised by Muḥammad since childhood) insisted that ʿAlī was the Rightly Guided Caliph, while the supporters of Muʿāwiyah b. Abī Sufyān (who joined his father fighting wars against Muḥammad and ordered his assassination, and whose mother ordered the assassination of Muḥammad's beloved uncle Ḥamzah, then mutilated his corpse and cannibalized his liver) insisted that Muʿāwiyah was the legitimate ruler instead.

Bloody civil wars were fought in which many thousands of Companions of the Prophet killed each other. Muʿāwiyah ordered that ʿAlī be cursed from all pulpits in the territories he usurped from the Caliphate, and persecuted the followers of ʿAlī with torture and death. More than once, to avoid all the senseless killings, ʿAlī challenged Muʿāwiyah to settle their dispute with a duel, man-to-man. Muʿāwiyah refused every time, knowing well that ʿAlī was a strong warrior who never lost a battle. A few years later, ʿAlī was assassinated during his prayers. Muʿāwiyah then ruled for the next twenty years until his death. He appointed his drunkard and womanizing son, Yazīd, the next leader of Muslims, without the consent or consultation of the Muslim community, and instituted the first dynastic succession in Islam. Leaders of Islam were now kings.

On his deathbed, Muʿāwiyah warned his son not to kill Muḥammad's grandson, Ḥusayn, but the first thing Yazīd did upon acceding to the throne

was to demand Ḥusayn's allegiance in secret, in the middle of the night, upon threat of death. Ḥusayn, who was raised in Islam in the lap of his grandfather, the Prophet Muḥammad, refused to acknowledge a drunkard and womanizer who neither prayed nor fasted, as leader of the Muslim community, and especially not in secret, without the consultation (*shūrá*) of the community. He insisted that an official announcement be made in the morning, and that the community should decide by collective consultation (*shūrá*), just as had been done for the first four Caliphs after Muḥammad. The confrontation culminated in the Battle of Karbalā' in the year 61/680, in which thousands of troops starved, deprived of water, then killed, mutilated and decapitated Ḥusayn and 72 of his followers, including women and Ḥusayn's infant son. Within only a half-century of the death of Muḥammad, the grandson of Muḥammad's worst enemy and his cannibal wife, killed and defiled the grandson of Muḥammad, whose only crime was refusing to acknowledge a womanizing drunkard's attempts to force himself upon Muslims as their leader.

After this traumatic period and the persecution that followed, the followers of the *Ahl al-Bayt* (the Household of the Prophet) who, after the Prophet's death, followed ʻAlī and then Ḥusayn, entered what historians call their 'quietist' phase: they began to avoid political confrontation and instead focused their energies on prayer, charity, and *duʿāʾ* (invocations). With the proliferation of writing and written materials in the decades and centuries that followed, many of their *duʿāʾs* and *duʿāʾ* collections were recorded and preserved, forming a rich invocation literature. The following are some of their most famous published *duʿāʾ* collections:[18]

- *Al-Ṣaḥīfah al-sajjādīyah* (The Writings of Sajjād) by ʻAlī b. Ḥusayn (the great-grandson of Muḥammad, who survived the Battle of Karbalā' because he was too ill, known as "al-Sajjād" (the Prostrator) for his piety and prayer, d. 93/ 712). A scholarly English translation by William

[18] A great many unpublished manuscripts are housed in library archives throughout the world, including many that have yet to be catalogued. In addition, the persecution of the followers of the *Ahl al-Bayt* throughout the centuries often included the burning of libraries and destruction of much of their literature. As with any persecuted minority group, what is available today is only the small fraction of the community's material history that has survived.

Chittick has been published: *The Psalms of Islam* (Birmingham: al-Mahdi Institute, 2007).

- *Duʿāʾ al-Jawshan* (The Invocation of Jawshan) by Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq (d. 148/765).
- *Duʿāʾ al-Jawshan al-ṣaghīr* (The Shorter Invocation of Jawshan) by Mūsā al-Kāẓim (d. 183/799).
- *Miṣbāh al-mutahajjid* (The Lamp of the One Who Prays Late into the Night) by Shaykh al-Ṭūsī (d. 460/1067).
- *Muhaj al-daʿawāt wa-manhaj al-ʿibādāt* (The Essence of Invocations and the Method for Acts of Worship) by ʿAlī ibn Mūsá Ibn Ṭāwūs (d. 665/1266)
- *Mafātīḥ al-jinān* (The Keys to the Heavens) by Shaykh ʿAbbās Qummī (d. 1360/1941).

Much like our reasons for collecting in this volume the prayers of prophets as they are quoted in the Qurʾān, there has been much interest in the extra-qurʾānic prayers of Muḥammad, as recorded in the *ḥadīth* literature that documents his purported sayings and deeds. Major canonical *ḥadīth* sources such as the *ṣiḥāḥ* collections of al-Bukhārī, Muslim, Tirmidhī, and Ibn Mājah, all contain dedicated sections devoted to narrations about *duʿāʾ*, including such matters as the virtues of such supplications, the appropriate conditions for supplication, the appropriate manner of performing or reciting them, the best times to do so, and which supplications are acceptable and which are not. These collections also document many of the supplications that the prophet Muḥammad himself recited on specific occasions, such as upon waking in the morning or before sleeping at night, and on many other occasions. Like the qurʾānic verses included in this book, these narrations of Muḥammad's supplications are highly regarded as examples for emulation by Muslims today. Many books and compilations have been written gathering, presenting, and commenting on these supplications. As a genre, *duʿāʾ* books continue to be very popular to this day. A great many modern versions are published in many languages throughout the world.

In addition to their modern versions, there are also many examples of works in this genre from the early Islamic and classical periods, as well as

later works by more famous scholars. The following are some examples of other ealy works in this genre: [19]

- *Kitāb al-duʿāʾ* (The Book of Invocations) by Muḥammad b. Fuḍayl b. Ghazwān al-Dabbī (d. 195/811).
- *Kitāb al-duʿāʾ* (The Book of Invocations) by Abū Dāwūd al-Sijistānī (d. 275/889).
- *Kitāb al-duʿāʾ* (The Book of Invocations) attributed to Ibn Abī al-Dunyā (d. 281/894).
- *Kitāb al-duʿāʾ* (The Book of Invocations) attributed to Ibn Abī ʿĀṣim (d. 287/900).
- *ʿAmal al-yawm wa-al-laylah* (Devotion of the Day and the Night) by Ḥasan b. ʿAlī b. Shabīb al-Maʿmarī (d. 295/908).
- *Kitāb al-dhikr* (The Book of Remembrance [of God]) by Yūsuf al-Qāḍī (d. 297/910).
- *Kitāb al-dhikr* (The Book of Remembrance [of God]) by Abū Bakr Jaʿfar b. Muḥammad al-Firyābī (d. 301/913).
- *ʿAmal al-yawm wa-al-laylah* (Devotion of the Day and the Night) by al-Nasāʾī (d. 303/915). This has been published (ed. Fārūq Ḥamāda, Rabat 1399/1985; Beirut 1407/1987).
- *Kitāb al-duʿāʾ* (The Book of Invocations) by Ḥusayn b. Ismāʿīl al-Mahāmilī al-Dabbī (d. 330/941).
- *Kitāb duʿāʾ anwaʿ al-istiʿādhāt min sāʾir al-āfāt wa-al-ʿāhāt* (The Book of Types of Invocations Requesting Protection from All Manner of Calamities and Misfortunes) by Abū al-Ḥusayn Ibn al-Munādī (d. 336/947).
- *Kitāb al-duʿāʾ* (The Book of Invocations) by al-Ṭabarānī (d. 360/971).
- *ʿAmal al-yawm wa-al-laylah* (Devotion of the Day and the Night) by Ibn al-Sunnī (d. 364/974). This has been published (ed. ʿAbd al-Qādir Aḥmad ʿAtāʾ, Cairo 1389/1969) and (rev. Abū Muḥammad Sālim b. Aḥmad al-Salafī, Beirut 1408/1988).

[19] The Turkish *Islam Ansiklopedisi* provides an excellent detailed literary history of the genre. This is a brief, summarized listing, reorganized in chronological order by author's death date. See: https://islamansiklopedisi.org.tr/dua#4-literatur accessed online 11/05/2024.

- *Kitāb al-duʿāʾ* (The Book of Invocations) by Ibn Abī Zayd al-Qayrawānī (d. 386/996).
- *Maʿānī al-daʿawāt wa-tafsīruhā* (The Meanings of Invocations and their Explanations) by Abū Sulaymān al-Bustī (d. 388/998).
- *Al-Adʿiyah* (Invocations) by Ibn Mardawayh al-Iṣfahānī (d. 410/1020).
- *Kitāb yawm wa-laylah* (The Book of Day and Night) by Aḥmad b. Muḥammad al-Talamankī (d. 429/1037-38).
- *ʿAmal al-yawm wa-al-laylah* (Devotion of the Day and the Night) by Abū Nuʿaym al-Iṣfahānī (d. 430/1038).
- *Kitāb al-daʿawāt* (The Book of Invocations) by Jaʿfar b. Muḥammad al-Mustaghfirī (d. 432/1041).
- *Kitāb al-duʿāʾ* (The Book of Invocations) by Abū Dharr al-Harawī (d. 434/1043).
- *Al-Daʿawāt al-kabīr* (The Massive Book of Invocations) by Aḥmad b. Ḥusayn al-Bayhaqī (d. 458/1066). This has been published (ed. Badr b. ʿAbdullāh al-Badr**,** Kuwait 1409/1989).
- *Kitāb al-duʿāʾ* (The Book of Invocations) by Abū al-Ḥasan al-Wāḥidī (d. 468/1076).
- *Al-duʿāʾ al-maʾthūr wa-ādābuh* (The [Book of] the Sound Invocation and Its Etiquette) by Abū Bakr al-Turṭūshī (d. 520/1126).
- *Al-Adhkār* (Remembrances [of God]) by al-Nawawī (d. 676/1277). Multiple editions have been published.
- *Al-Kalim al-ṭayyib* (The Kindly Word) by Taqī al-Dīn ibn Taymīyah (d. 728/1328). This has been widely published.
- *Al-Daʿawāt* (The [Book of] Invocations) by Aḥmad b. Ḥarb (d. 741/1340).
- *Silāḥ al-muʾmin* (The Weapon of the Believer) by Taqī al-Dīn ibn al-Imām (d. 745/1344).
- *Al-Ḥiṣn al-ḥaṣīn min kalām sayyid al-mursalīn* (The Fortress of Protection from the Words of the Leader of Messengers) by Ibn al-Jazarī (d. 833/1430). This has been published and reprinted numerous times.
- *ʿAmal al-yawm wa- al-laylah* (Devotion of the Day and the Night) by Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī (d. 852/1449).
- *ʿAmal al-yawm wa- al-laylah* (Devotion of the Day and the Night) by Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī (d. 911/1505).

As with any faith community, there are many different groups of Muslims.[20] Today, the two main groups are called Sunnī and Shīʿī. Neither of these groups existed at the time of Muḥammad. Of course, both claim to be followers of the 'original' *sunnah* (tradition) of Muḥammad. Sunnīs today hold in very high esteem many of the Imāms of the Shīʿīs, including ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib, Ḥassan and Ḥusayn, the two grandsons of the Prophet, and Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq, the 5th generation grandson of the Prophet. Similarly, Shīʿīs today have tremendous respect for many of the closest companions of the Prophet, such as Bilāl, Salmān, and others who were among the earliest believers and who suffered the persecution, torture, and sometimes death, inflicted upon the early companions of the Prophet by the enemies of Islam. In other words, at the time of Muḥammad, there was no such thing as Sunnī or Shīʿī. All believers were simply 'Muslim.'

The word '*sunnah*' and its derivatives appear 17 times in the Qurʾān, usually in reference to the *sunnah* of God (e.g., Q, al-Fatḥ, 48:23) or the *sunnah* of those who came before (e.g., Q, al-Aḥzāb, 23:62). Its qurʾānic meaning is 'the way of…' or 'tradition of…' and similar meanings. The word '*shīʿah*' and its derivatives appear 12 times in the Qurʾān. Usually it means 'group,' or groups, such as members of the same team or tribe. For example, when Moses entered the city and saw two men fighting (Q, Qaṣaṣ, 28:15), the Qurʾān says that one of the men fighting was from Moses's *shīʿah* (the same group as Moses), and the other man fighting was not. Sometimes the word '*shīʿah*' means 'follower of…,' such as the verse that says Abraham was one of the *shīʿah* of Noah (Q, al-Ṣaffāt, 37:83). The meanings are similar, since all who follow the same person or thing are considered to be one group.

After the Prophet's death, when Muʿāwiyah went against the *jamāʿah* (majority consensus), refused to acknowledge ʿAlī as the Rightly Guided Caliph, commanded people to curse ʿAlī in sermons and prayers, and gathered armies to fight and kill ʿAlī, the people who supported Muʿāwiyah were called the *shīʿat Muʿāwiyah* (the followers of Muʿāwiyah) and the people who recognized that ʿAlī was the Rightly Guided Caliph, and the true guardian of the Qurʾān and the *sunnah* of the Prophet who raised him, were

[20] This section is borrowed from my *Story of Islam* (Chicago, SJL Press, 2025) and modified slightly slightly for our purposes here.

called the *shīʿat ʿAlī* (the followers of ʿAlī). Those who abused ʿUthmān and set up his murder, mostly governors and administrators who, like Muʿāwiyah, were children of Muḥammad's worst ememies in Makkah, joined Muʿāwiyah and became the *shīʿah* of Muʿāwiyah. The close companions of the Prophet, the earliest believers, and their children, many of whom suffered persecution, starvation, and torture at the hands of the very people who allied themselves with Muʿāwiyah, believed that ʿAlī (not Muʿāwiyah) followed the Qurʿān and the *sunnah* of the Prophet. When ʿAlī, the Rightly Guided Caliph, known as the Commander of the Faithful, called them to join him in defending the Qurʾān and the *sunnah* of the Prophet, they gladly joined him and became the *shīʿah* of ʿAlī.

After ʿAlī's death, the *shīʿah* of ʿAlī continued to follow the Prophet's grandsons, Ḥasan and Ḥusayn. They continued to believe that no one understood and lived by the Qurʾān and the *sunnah* of Muḥammad better than Muḥammad's own family, since the Prophet himself raised them in the Qurʾān and in his *sunnah*. After Muʿāwiyah's death, the *shīʿah* of Muʿāwiyah continued to follow Muʿāwiyah's son, Yazīd, for the same un-Islamic reasons that they followed Muʿāwiyah. After Yazīd's unprecedentedly vile massacre of Ḥusayn and the remainder of the Prophet's family at Karbalāʾ, the *shīʿah* of ʿAlī realized just how low the family of Muʿāwiyah would stoop in their greed for gold and lust for worldly power. The family of the Prophet and the *shīʿah* of ʿAlī gave up any interest in government leadership. They decided instead to focus instead on spiritual leadership and on preserving the Qurʾān and the *sunnah* of the Prophet. Three years later, at the Battle of Harrah, the last surviving companions in Makkah and Madīnah learned the same lesson. Yazīd's army attacked and killed hundreds of the companions of the Prophet, who were neither *shīʿah* of Muʿāwiyah nor *shīʿah* of ʿAlī, but insisted on justice, qurʾānic principles, and maintaining the *sunnah*. After massacring hundreds of the Prophet's companions and thousands of other innocent civilians, Yazīd's army then continued towards Makkah. Yazīd's army beseiged the city and bombed the holy Kaʿbah, destroying the first holy House of God built by Abraham. After Yazīd, the family of Muʿāwiyah continued to cling to power, violently crushing all opposition. Since Muʿāwiyah first claimed power, he and his family ruled Islamdom as the Umayyah Dynasty for nearly a hundred years. In the year 132/750, their dynasty was overthrown by the ʿAbbāsī revolution. The surviving Umayyah descendants of Muʿāwiyah's family ran away to the furthest edge of Islamdom and established themselves in Spain.

During the next few centuries is when most of what we now call 'Islam' began to form.[21] The famous ḥadīth books were written by scholars such as al-Bukhārī (d. 256/870) and Muslim (d. 261/875) and the famous Qurʾān *tafsīr* (exegesis) books were written by scholars such as al-Ṭabarī (d. 310/923) and others. It is in this period that many famous scholars, such as Abū Ḥanīfah (d. 150/767), Mālik ibn Anas (d. 179/795), and al-Shāfiʿī (d. 204/820), and Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal (d. 241/855) lived, taught, and wrote their scholarly works. There were many such scholars, who had their own teachings and disagreed with the teachings of the other scholars. Each of these scholars had students and disciples who believed in their approach to Islam. In those early centuries, there were many different groups of Muslims. Regardless of which group they affiliated with, there has never been anyone who claimed to be Muslim but refused to believe in the Qurʾān or follow the *sunnah* (the way of, the practice of) the Prophet Muḥammad. Then, as now, the differences between various Muslim groups came from disagreements about how qurʾānic verses are interpreted, and which reports of the Prophet's *sunnah* they believed to be authentic. Around 300-400 years after Muḥammad, even though they disagreed with each other's teachings, the followers of the of the four famous scholars mentioned above began to agree that only their four teachers were legitimate authorities of religious teachings. These are the groups that eventually came to be called 'Sunnī.'

Meanwhile, the *shīʿah* of ʿAlī continued to follow the teachings of the family of the Prophet. They also continued to preserve the *sunnah* of the Prophet in their scholarly works. The only difference between the ḥadīth collections of the groups that now call themselves Sunnī and the group that is called Shīʿī is that Sunnī ḥadīth books include transmissions sourced from many different companions of the Prophet, while Shīʿī ḥadīth books accept transmissions only from the family of the Prophet. Both Sunnī and Shīʿī ḥadīth books contain many of the same ḥadīths, just reported by different transmitters. This should not be surprizing. The Prophet was an important figure. He was often surrounded by many people. When he said or did something noticeable, it was likely to be witnessed by both members of his family and by his close companions.

Even as different schools of thought were developing, all Muslims (except for the *shīʿah* of Muʿāwiyah) continued to love the Prophet and his family. Mālik ibn Anas (d. 179/795), and Abū Ḥanīfah (d. 150/767) studied

[21] For a closer look, see *Our Faith*, a forthcoming publication from SJL Press.

with the sixth Shīʿī Imām, Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq (d. 148/765), and narrated ḥadīths from him. He was the great-great-great-grandson of Muḥammad, the Prophet's direct descendant from the line of the Prophet's daughter, Fāṭimah. He was also related to the first Rightly Guided Caliph, Abū Bakr, from his mother's side, and to the fourth Rightly Guided Caliph, ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib, from his father's side. Muslim ibn Ḥajjāj (d. 261/875), in his *Saḥīḥ Muslim*, includes many authentic transmissions narrated from him and from others among the family of the Prophet. The scholar al-Shāfiʿī (d. 204/820) was well-known for his love of the Prophet's family. This famous Sunnī scholar so proudly publicised his love for the family of the Prophet that he was even accused of being Shīʿī. He was brought before a government tribunal for a trial and there was an inquisition. He composed a poem stating, "If love of the Family of Muḥammad is heresy, then I am a heretic!"[22]

As the centuries passed, the different schools of thought continued to diverge from each other, but the love of Muḥammad and his family remained a universal characteristic held by *all Muslims*. And it still is, to this day. The family of Muḥammad is reserved a special place not held by any other human beings, with the exception of Abraham and his family. Five times every day, in every prayer, Muslims ask God to shower peace and blessings on Muḥammad *and the family of Muḥammad*. Love of Muḥammad and his family is not a Sunnī thing or a Shīʿī thing. It is a *Muslim* thing.

There are many authentic hadīths in which the Prophet commanded his followers to do so, because it is commanded by God in the Qurʾān:

﴿ قُل لَّآ أَسۡـَٔلُكُمۡ عَلَيۡهِ أَجۡرًا إِلَّا ٱلۡمَوَدَّةَ فِي ٱلۡقُرۡبَىٰ ﴾

"Say, I do not ask from you any reward for it
other than the love of my family."
(Q. al-Shūrá, 42:23)

[22] Muḥammad ibn Idrīs al-Shāfiʿī, *Dīwan al-Shāfiʿī*, ed. Emil Badīʿ Yaʿqūb (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-ʿArabī, 1316/1996), 93, poem 84. Translated here as 'heretic', Sunnīs often use the Arabic word *rāfiḍī* in place of Shīʿī.

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﴿ وَآخِرُ دَعْوَاهُمْ أَنِ الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ ﴾

“And their closing prayer is
‘All praises due to God, the Lord of the worlds!’ ”
(Q. Yūnus, 10:10)

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